COLLECTIBLE GUITAR

then and now

Sparkleburst Sunday

STEVE WARINER

REVIEWS

- GRETSCH G5623 ELECTROMATIC (RED) BONO SIGNATURE GUITAR
- WD MUSIC REPLACEMENT TUNERS
- BOOTLEGGER HOUNDER GUITAR
- SOUND SYNERGIES® PENETRATING CONDITIONERS & LUBRICANTS
- JHS UNICORN PEDAL
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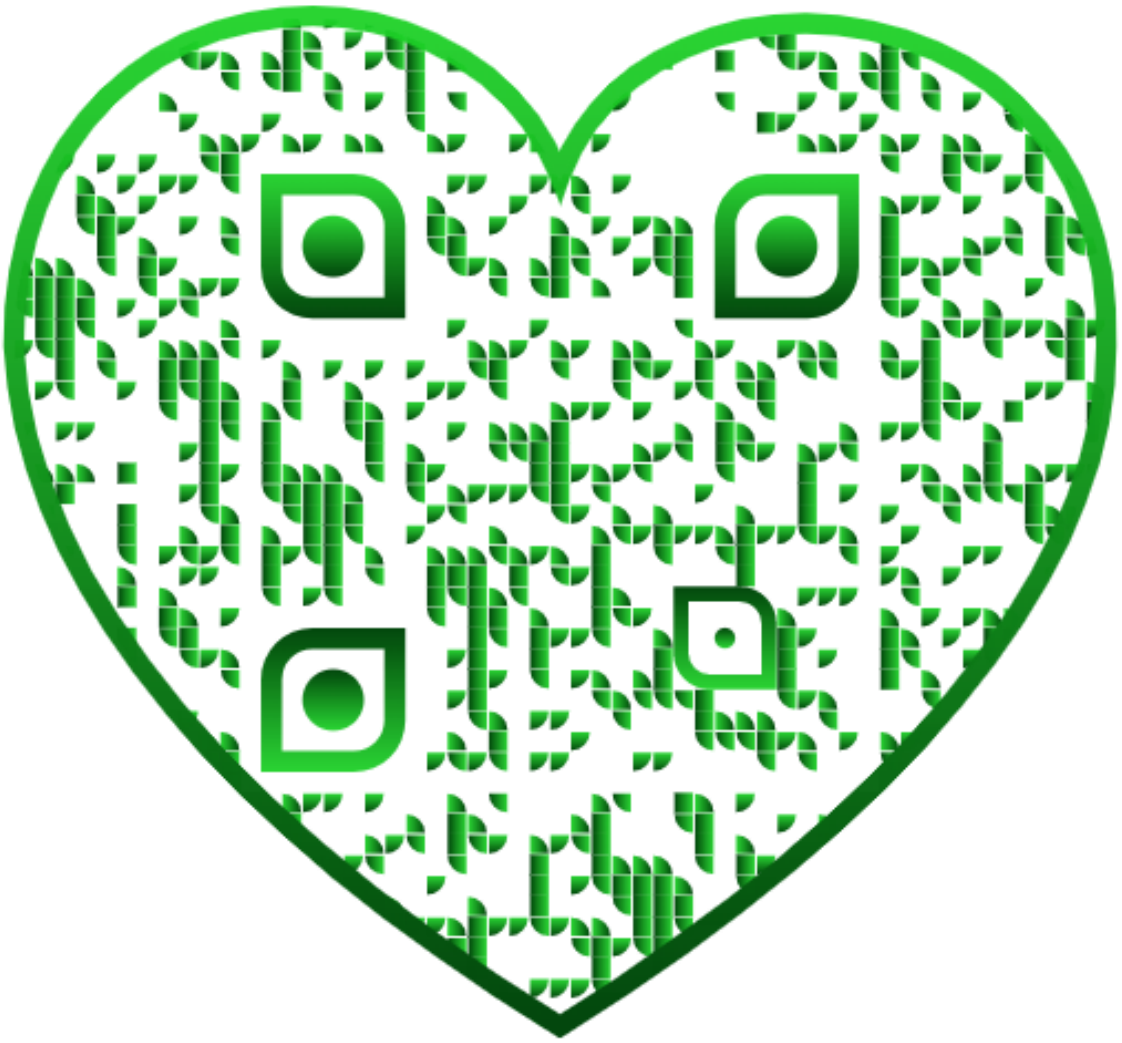

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FROM ONE COLLECTOR TO ANOTHER…

25 Out of 26 So Far Isn't Too Shabby…

Last August I got a text from a friend of mine that was also sent to three other people at the same time. It was asking all of us if any of us were interested in some guitars that had been stashed away in a back room of a music store in Mississippi for a long time.

I was on a land line when my cell got the text, and after I wrapped up the call within seconds I was dialing my friend hoping I might not be the 4th guy calling about these "lost" guitars. It turns out I was the first to respond and after hearing a description of what they might be… the "early intel" was pretty murky but the theme of the conversation was more than enough to keep me interested; a family-run music store had been placing guitars in a back room (some since the 1970's) and now when they were in need of a cash infusion have decided to really go through those all-but-forgotten guitars and put them up for sale.

My friend/contact had seen a lot of old cases back there but had not really had a chance to open up but a few of them. The music store owner had mentioned some of the items to him but they weren't even sure if it was 15-20 guitars or so at that point. Some of the cases were empty. I decided to take a bold move. I asked my friend to let the owner know that just like his retail store ran on a percentage of profit (and I ran a music store for 11 years in Los Angeles, CA from 1978-1989 so I knew some of where this man was coming from) that if he allowed me some flipping room, that I might be interested in buying the whole lot of them from him at one time. That would eliminate all of the effort of photographing all of the guitars and writing all of the descriptions about each guitar as they posted them all on eBay and then taking a percentage hit with each guitar they sold on-line. The owner understood the offer and I was given the thumbs up.

Now came the hard work of trying to assess each guitar's merits and giving them a "street" value. I brought in my friend and trusty advisor Joe Riggio to help me. We ran past eBay "solds" histories on guitars with similar age and characteristics. We factored in the Vintage Guitar Guide Book and also some good common sense. Then, depending on the collectability of the guitar, we assigned it a "wholesale" price (basically a price I would be willing to pay for it).

As the list of guitars keep unfolding I was getting more and more excited about this "one fell swoop" purchase. We took the first batch of nine guitars and arrived at a price.

There were three different pricing scales used. If it was a regular vintage guitar with a lot of wear we would take 30% off of the assessed street value to get to that wholesale number. It the instrument was in pretty good shape and was desirable we would only take 25% off of the "street" value. And if it was in mint condition or, as several of them were… actually "New Old Stock" (N.O.S.), then we just subtracted 20%. I was more than happy to operate on 20% with guitars that were in such great shape.

Here is a partial list of what came in…

1966 Gibson 330 Semi Hollow

70's Electra 340 Jacaranda Sunburst

80's Peavey T-60's (2 NOS & 2 used)

1974 Fender Jazzmaster Bass Sunburst NOS

1973 Gibson L6 Natural

1976 Fender P-Bass Natural NOS

1973 Gibson EB-0 Bass Burgandy

1969 Gibson Melody Maker Wine

1959 Gibson ES-125 T Sunburst

In the end we struck a deal for 23 of the guitars and I was both excited and a little nervous. That was a lot of guitars to even try to take in and store at one time… let alone re-sell them. Then, just when I thought the deal was complete, I got word that they had three un-opened boxes in the same back room. They were Peavey Wolfgang models, all made in the USA (one from 1998 and two from 2004). Their shipping boxes had never been opened. They had the original packing slips still attached to the box. To tell the truth I almost politely passed on them as that was a little left of center for me stylistically, but I had more than one friend counsel me that there was a very real market for those Wolfgangs, so I upped the ante' to 26 guitars. Yikes! I bought a boatload of guitars, and the music store had some good funds to put in their bank account.

A strategy started to form for me. You are probably saying, "Yes, keep them all!" Well that wasn't my plan. My plan was to sell some of them to local vintage music stores where I had a good relationship with the owners. I knew that would cut into my profit margin some, but it would also secure a quick turn around for some of my investment funds. I moved about 1/3 of them sideways. Then we had our Seatac Guitar Show in Kent, WA last September and I sold three more there. After that, I

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COLLECTIBLE GUITAR then and now

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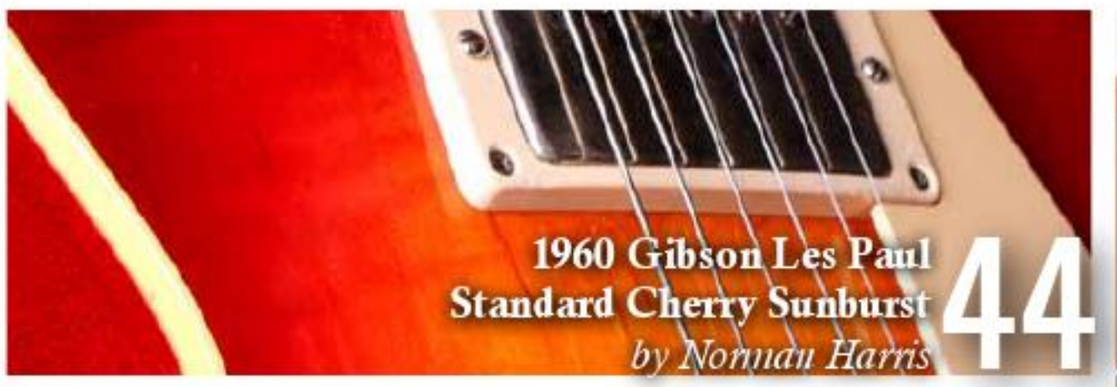

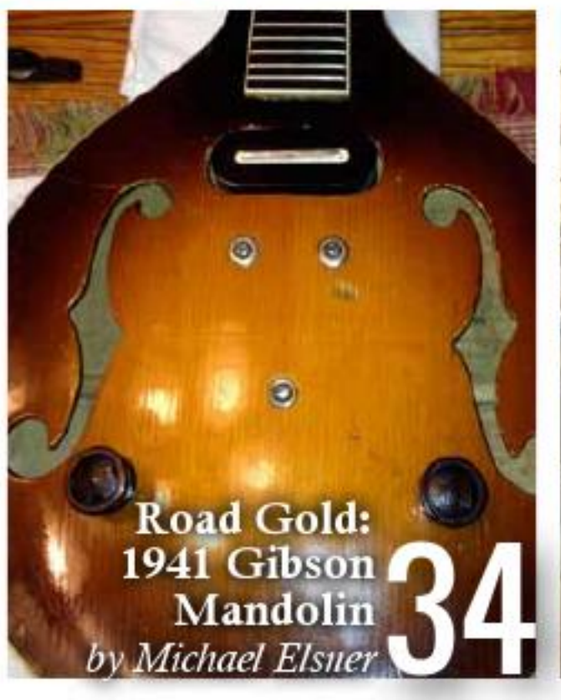

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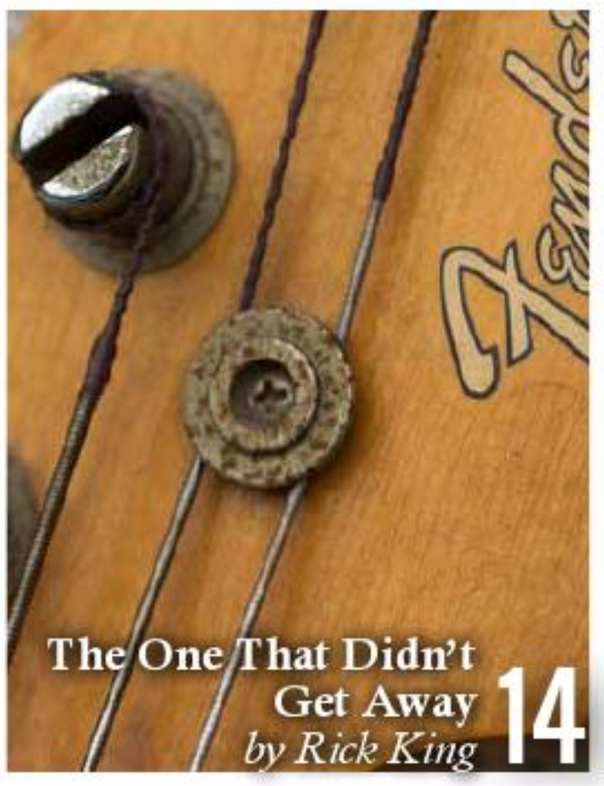

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Gretsch G5623 Electromatic (RED) Bono Signature Guitar

by Doug Doppler

SPECS

- Body: Laminated Maple
- Finish: Gloss Urethane
- Pickups: 2x Black Top Filter'Tron
- Controls: Master Volume, Master Tone
- Neck: Maple
- Fingerboard: Rosewood
- Frets: 22
- Nut Width: 1.6875"
- Scale: 24.6"
- Case: Hardshell (included)

Purpose Driven Guitar

Gretsch and Bono partnered together to create the G5623 Electromatic Center-Block (RED) Bono 'Signature' Model. By partnering with top manufacturers, (RED) enables you to buy top-notch products to help end the global AIDS epidemic. Gretsch dontates 20% of the wholesale price of each of these instruments, translating to roughly eighty-four days of live-saving pills.

Big Picture

As the name implies, the G5623 Electromatic Center-Block (RED) Bono 'Signature' model, is another Center-Block addition to the Electromatic line. Electromatics deliver classic Gretsch styling at an affordable price point. Perhaps the best reason these instruments have resonated with so many players is that they play and sound great.

Although Gretsch has played a big role in the trademark sound of bands like AC/DC and The Cult, they are not the traditional instrument of choice for players who are into copious amounts of high gain. Gretsch's Center-Block instruments feature a solid block of spruce bracing that runs the length of the body, designed to thwart the kind of howling feedback you get when cranking up a traditional hollow body electric. Center-Block instruments inherit the trademark airiness of hollow bodies on cleaner tones, while delivering great sustain for dirty rhythms and leads–sans hollow body howl. If you have a moment to search "Doppler" and "Gretsch" on YouTube, you'll get a chance to see this in action on the G5620 demo I did for Gretsch.

The Sound

Like each of the Center-Block Electromatics, the G5623 has it's own unique voice–one that has as much beauty as it does brawn. True to form, I also found this voice to be incredibly versatile when tested across a broad range of great amps.

Since I used the Dumble-inspired Sebago Sound DT-25 on a number of the demos for the G5620 video, I decided to start there. One of my favorite demos from the aforementioned video utilized a clean jazz tone with some reverb, and the G5623 sounded every bit as good at the G5620, but again with it's own unique voice. The G5623 did a brilliant job of accentuating the harmonics-laden highs and sweet lows this amp delivers–and vice versa.

Next I moved over to an Orange Rockerverb 100, and mojo is the word I'd use to describe those magical moments. I will admit that I had a "Wonderwall" of a Noel Gallagher moment on the Clean channel, grooving on all the rich twang that filled the room.

Once I started cranking the gain on the

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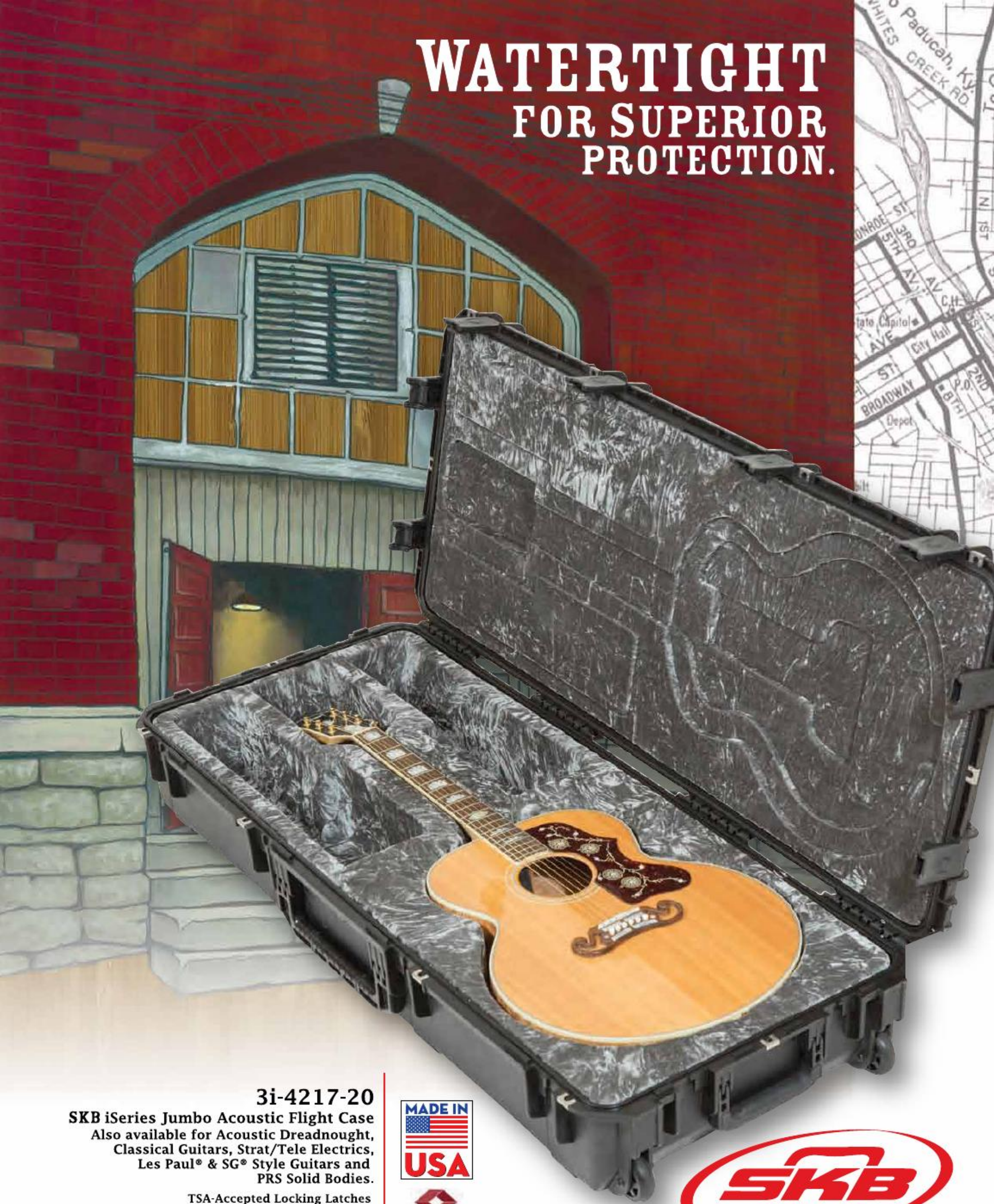

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QUIRKY VINTAGE

by Bob Cianci

Zen-On Audition Solid-Body

This month's quirky vintage guitar is a 1965 Zen-On Audition two pickup solid-body, another piece from my ever-growing collection of oddball '60s Japanese guitars.

I know what you must be thinking, "Does he really think we care about Japanese electrics from the 60's? Why is he bothering with cheap junk like that?"

To answer your objections, the market for vintage Japanese electric guitars is growing at a steady clip, and the stories behind some of these quirky guitars are interesting. Consider this the first in several installments. As to the second part of the objection, many Japanese electrics from the 1960's can be adjusted and set up to play very well, and offer the guitarist an alternative to standard, everyday Les Pauls, Strats, Teles and many other guitars. One of these Asian beauties just might add a new tonal color to your musical palette.

But first, let's look at some history of the Zen-On company.

The Japanese guitar industry literally exploded in the early 1960s. At its height in 1965, Japan produced over 760,000 guitars in one year! There were over a dozen major manufacturers and many smaller companies cranking out budget priced instruments largely aimed at the burgeoning teenage market, although some Japanese guitar companies did produce professional quality instruments. One of those offering decent quality was Zen-On, located in central Japan in the mountainous area near Lake Suwa. Zen-On started in the 1930's as music publishers, and took over a guitar factory in the early 1950s called Hayashi Gakki, where they produced acoustic guitars as well as continuing its music publishing concerns.

Zen-On commenced manufacture of electric guitars around 1962 that quickly became popular with young Japanese rock bands. Most of the company's output at the time was hollow-body electrics, but they gradually switched over to solid-bodies, and by the time interest in electric guitars really started in 1964, Zen-On was poised to become a major worldwide player in the industry. They negotiated deals with many US distributors, retailers and chain department stores, including Woolworth's, the famed five and dime. Like many Japanese guitar makers, Zen-On marketed guitars under many names, including Artist, Artist Supreme, Audition, Knox, Lafayette, Morales, Olympic, Omega, Rodeo, Rossi, Victoria, Zenon and Zim-Gar, a familiar name in my area of northern New Jersey. The model we're looking at today is labeled Audition.

This Audition Zen-On features a six-in-line headstock, typical of Japanese electrics of the day, along with a 24.75" scale length. The neck is one piece maple, is steel reinforced with no truss rod, and is bolted on with four screws and a back plate. The small, plywood Fender-like offset waist body features an understated and sturdy sunburst finish with an attractive and distinctively curvaceous "crashing wave" pickguard, two on/off rocker switches for the twin Gold Foil pickups, and two volume controls and one tone. Other Audition models of this type came with one or three pickups, but the two pickup version is the most common. The bridge is cheap plastic, but is compensated for accurate intonation. The strings are attached to a covered vibrato unit. The arm on mine has been missing for years, as is typical of many guitars of this period, but a clever guitar tech could probably fashion one from a Fender Jaguar arm, for instance. Let's now focus on the neck and pickups specifically.

The neck is a large D-shaped "baseball bat" to compensate for the lack of a truss rod, but it's surprisingly comfortable to play. Guitarists who inexplicably prefer skinny necks might have a problem with the sheer girth. It's a matter of taste, but thin necks cause me hand cramps, so the size of this neck is near perfect. The frets are small, as to be expected, and the neck is nicely bound and features black dot markers, which are often missing on Japanese guitars from this time period. The neck on this example is not perfectly straight and has a small hump on the treble side by the thirteenth fret that thankfully has no bearing at all on playability. There's no "fret out" whatsoever, and no buzzing. The guitar plays fine.

And now, the good part; the pickups are those highly desirable "Gold Foil" units that have become so popular lately. Some sellers are asking as much as $200 apiece for Gold Foils, although as we all know, "asking" and "getting" are often two different stories. Suffice to say that Japanese 60's Gold Foils are highly prized today, largely as a result of Ry Cooder's use of one on his favorite bottleneck Stratocaster, and for their legendary tone. One of the only negatives with Gold Foils is the lack of adjustability; they cannot be lowered, but they can be easily raised.

When I acquired this bone stock guitar several months ago, I immediately took it to one of my techs, Tony Marchitelli of Majestic Guitars in Caldwell, New Jersey. Tony set it up, did a little work on the wiring for the rocker switches (which remain a bit finicky), and raised both pickups with small pieces of wood. When I got it home and plugged it into my Sommatone Slick 18 combo amp, the volume and tone was overwhelming, with a sound that favored mids and bass. For supposedly low volume pickups, the clean, muscular output almost

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GIBSON CUSTOM AT SWEETWATER

Gibson CUSTOM

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Serial #: CC12A042

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WD Music Replacement Tuners

by Jack Mao

Founded in 1978, WD Music Products has grown into one of the world's largest suppliers of stringed instrument parts. WD Music offers a wide variety of replacement guitar tuners that feature innovative materials and custom designs, as well as exact specification replications of hard to find vintage guitar tuners. In short, WD makes replacement guitar tuners that can't be gotten anywhere else. Products like their Waffle back tuners previously were unavailable unless you were lucky enough to find a vintage replacement set on the open market.

All of WD Music's replacement tuners feature a high level of attention to detail and "vintage accurate designs" that make them appropriate replacements for a wide range of vintage guitars… in particular those 50's and 60's Gibson guitars originally fitted with Kluson tuners. For our 1969 Gibson SG Standard test guitar shown here, Dave Lewis at WD Music was kind enough to provide a set of Kluson Deluxe Double Row Keystone (note the double ring on the keys) replacement tuners appropriate for this instrument.

The vintage Grover's on this particular guitar when we got it are certainly not bad tuners - just not what originally shipped on the guitar. Over the years and typically on vintage Gibson guitars a common modification was to upgrade the tuners because of perceived tuning issues… Grover and Schaller's often being the only choice for a replacement as the aftermarket vintage replacement parts industry is a fairly recent development. I found WD Music to have great customer service and their staff has a depth of knowledge on guitar tuners that is truly impressive (if you are looking for a set of hard to find replacement tuners or are in need of a set of tuners designed to your exact specifications I would definitely suggest giving them a call).

Alex Alcocer at Truetone Music in Santa Monica

Generally speaking over the years "bad" tuners have been perceived as the cause of a lot of common intonation problems but usually is not ultimately the issue. For example, tuning or intonation problems may have been caused by the way you strung the guitar, improperly cutting the nut, setup and action issues and or simply bad strings. This is not to remove all blame on "bad" or "worn out" tuners, just that problems caused by the tuners themselves are more rare than most people realize.

So when the decision was made (as was the case here) to replace the tuners and a set of appropriate replacement tuners had been selected, the next step is to make sure the tuners you are replacing will fit on the holes occupied by the previous tuners. In doing this many people will run into problems getting an exact fit due to improperly bored out tuning holes. This can be solved by using a variety of widely available conversion bushings (WD Music offers an extensive selection of replacement bushings). As it turned out the replacement bushings WD Music provided worked with the original washers on our test guitar. Yes, there were some cosmetic issues in replacing the existing

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THE ONE THAT DIDN'T GET AWAY

by Rick King

The Race and Olmsted 1966 Fender Coronado and Mustang Bass

photos by Joe Riggio

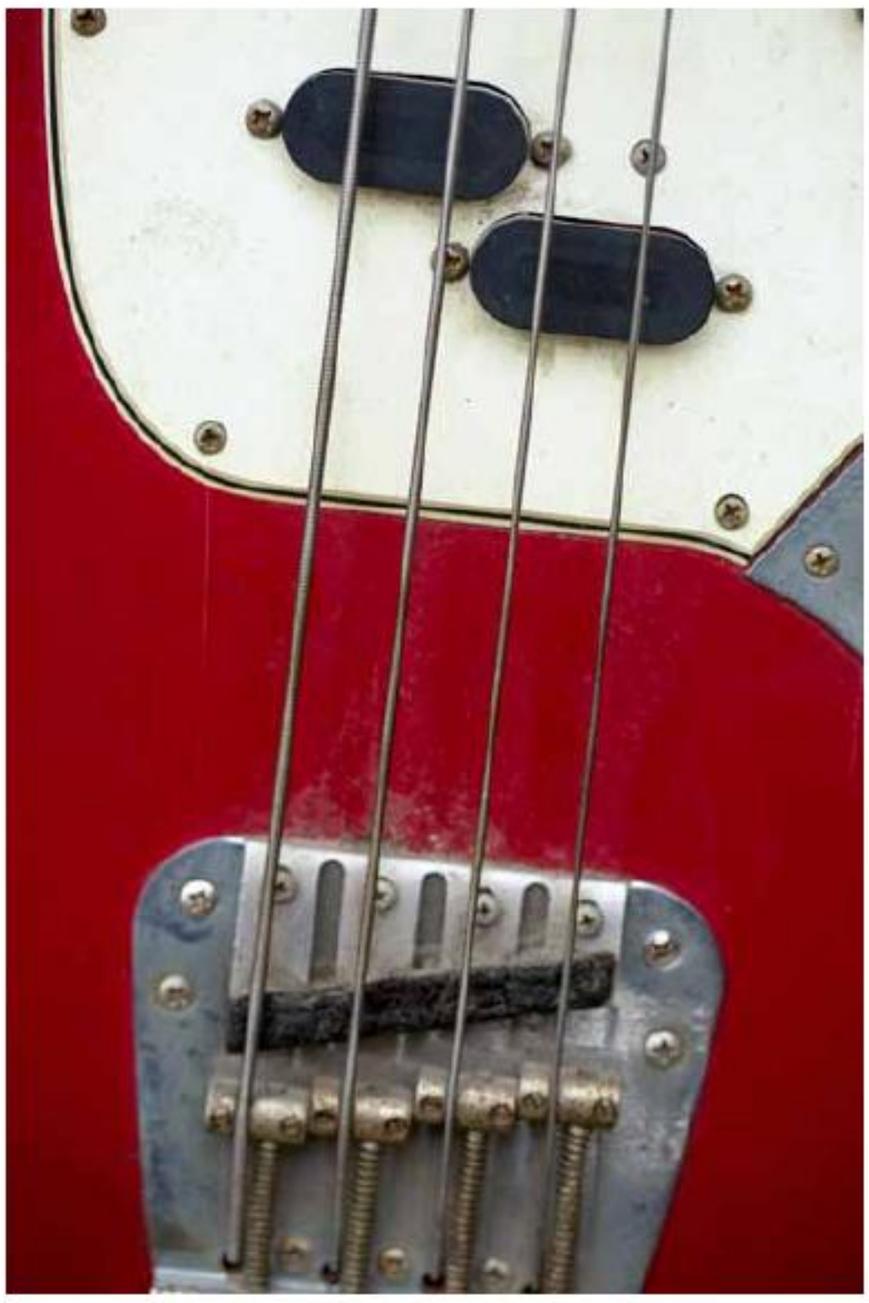
I don't know why I am feeling nostalgic. Maybe it is because as I write this tomorrow is my birthday. More likely it's because today I attended my childhood friends father's funeral. Gretchen Cole and I have been friends for 45 years. Her father Jim was like a father to me. Seeing her today made me think about all those friends you have known for many years, time passes, but when you see them again it's like no time has passed at all. I have met many people in the past 30 plus years of dealing in vintage guitars. Some have passed away, some have dropped out of the business for good, some drop out to drop back in many years later, while some remain close throughout all the years.

Someone that I met back in my early days that still remains close is Drew Berlin. Drew and I have done many deals throughout the years. I truly respect his friendship, his fairness and his honesty. About four years ago, I gave Drew a call to see what was up. He informed me that he was in possession of a couple of guitars that were presented to Race and Olmsted Tool and Dye. Karl Olmstead and his partner Lymon Race decided to start a much needed tool and dye company in Fullerton CA, making specialty tools and dyes that customers could use to stamp out metal parts on punch presses. They were looking for work with their new company, and Leo Fender was in need of dyes for parts in his early manufacturing. Coincidently, Race and Olmstead was located across the alley from the back door of Leo Fender's lab building, where all the magic happened. Prior to their partnership, Fender was laboriously making all their parts by hand.

In those early years, Race and Olmsted extended a lot of credit to Fender, even when it meant potentially over-extending themselves. If it wasn't for the guitar craze at that time, both companies might not have survived. In Forest White's book, "The Inside Story" he states, "I can't begin to tell you how important they were in helping with the development of our new Fender products. No matter what we had to make, they came up with good ideas on how to tool for producing the parts". Race and Olmsted continued to make the metal tooling and most of the metal parts for the next 30 plus years. When CBS took over Fender, they wanted to shy away from the Kluson tuning keys, and produce their own. By using the Kluson tuning keys, they had to clip the end off to allow them to fit in a 6-in-line configuration. This meant extra labor for clipping and grinding off the end. So Fender bought machines in Germany for their newly designed tuning keys and placed those machines at Race

and Olmsted. No one at the Fender factory had the specialized skills to run those machines.

Drew told me that he received the guitars from Karen Olmsted Lett (Karls' daughter) after his passing in March 2011. She provided Drew with a memo explaining that the guitars were presented to Race and Olmsted in appreciation for providing the tooling for the bridges, tailpieces and control plates for these two different models. Both guitars were hanging in the Race and Olmsted office since the mid 60's. I told Drew that I had to have the two guitars. One was a 1966 Fender Coronado I: the other, one of my favorite Fender basses, the Fender Mustang bass also from 1966. One cool feature that both guitars share is that the only logo on the headstock is "Fender", with no model designation. I believe I have seen this on a Coronado once before. But Drew informed me that the guitars were spoken for and that a mutual friend had shown interest in them. I was disappointed. I really wanted that Mustang bass. Much to my surprise however, at the very next SoCal World Guitar Show in Costa Mesa, CA, I found out that Drew's buyer had passed on them so Drew had brought them to the show to offer them to me. As I mentioned before, Drew is fair, and I got them for what I thought was a great deal. A two-for-one that didn't get away. Thanks again Drew!



Rick King is the owner of Guitar Maniacs in Tacoma Washington. He lives in Gig Harbor with his wife Sheila, two dogs and a cat. Contact Rick: rickking58@gmail.com

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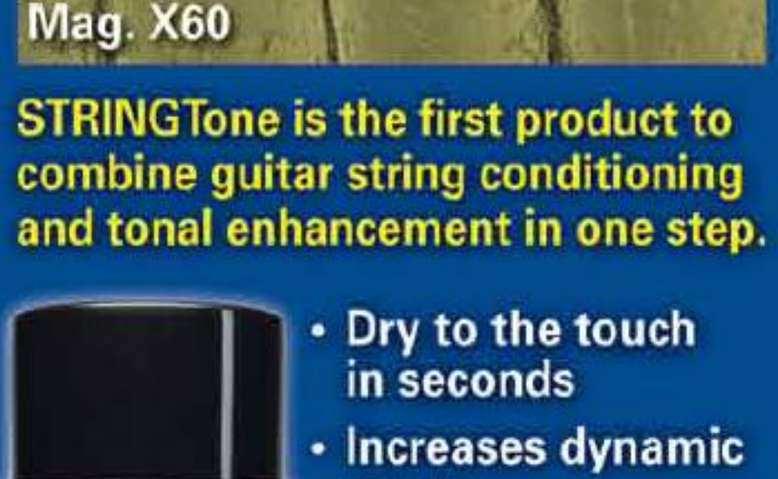

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ALL ABOUT AMPS

with Skip Simmons

Some Q&A

The pots on my '73 Princeton Reverb have gotten "scratchy". Can they be cleaned up without removing them from the chassis?

Cleaning pots is no problem. You should not remove the pots from the chassis or unsolder any leads, but you do need to remove the amp chassis from the cabinet so that you can actually see the pots. On a modern printed circuit board amp this can be difficult, but not on your '73 Fender!

Just squirt a little of your favorite electronic cleaner in the small opening at the base of the solder terminals and rotate the pot several times. If it is still noisy you may have to replace it. While you are at it, remove each knob so that you can tighten the nut that holds the pot to the chassis.

Is the slight hum I hear out of my Kalamazoo Rev 12 a characteristic of the amp or not? Is it an expensive fix?

A slight hum might be perfectly normal. Compared to new amps, some older circuits can be a little noisy, especially when it comes to "hum" at idle. I often hear from people who aren't in a band situation worrying about a little noise that would not be a problem if they were jamming with a couple of friends. Alone in a quiet room, there will often be some noise. Of course, I can't be sure that an amp is running perfectly without actually seeing it. Many things could cause excessive hum including bad filter caps or my personal fave, a lack of plain old servicing. One little thing I'd do for sure on any amp with reverb is to check the RCA connectors on the reverb tank to make sure they are clean and tight.

I have a blackface Fender Bassman head and my sound cuts in and out when you wiggle the guitar cord where it plugs in to the amp. I tried two new cords but it didn't help. What could be causing this?

A common problem with vintage amps is a loose or dirty input jack. This problem often causes crackling or signal drop-out. It also sounds just like a bad guitar cord, so it's easy to keep trying different cords in an attempt to get rid of the problem. The jack can be cleaned using a small brush designed for cleaning a .22 rifle bore. These brushes are available at most sporting goods stores or anywhere that sells ammo, and are just a couple of bucks. They fit a standard 1/4" jack perfectly. Push the brush in and out of the jack a few times and you are done. It can make a big difference! Be sure to tighten the nut that holds the jack to the chassis. A nut driver is best, but a small crescent-wrench will work if you are careful not to let it slip or mar the control panel. This nut makes a crucial ground connection on most vintage amps.

Most of the affordable modern amps use plastic input jacks that are soldered directly to a printed circuit board. Many of these amps, like the Fender Blues Junior, actually sound great and offer good value for the money, but the input jacks are a real weak link. All it takes to break one is a good hard yank on your guitar cord, so always loop the cable through the handle, under the amp, or any other way you can think of to create a "strain relief" for the cord because it sure is easy to trip over a cord on a crowded bandstand! Converting the jack to a standard all-metal Switchcraft jack is an excellent upgrade for many printed circuit board amps, but is not easy to do if you don't have some soldering experience.

I have a '54 Fender Tweed Deluxe that was spray painted black many years ago.

continued on page 40

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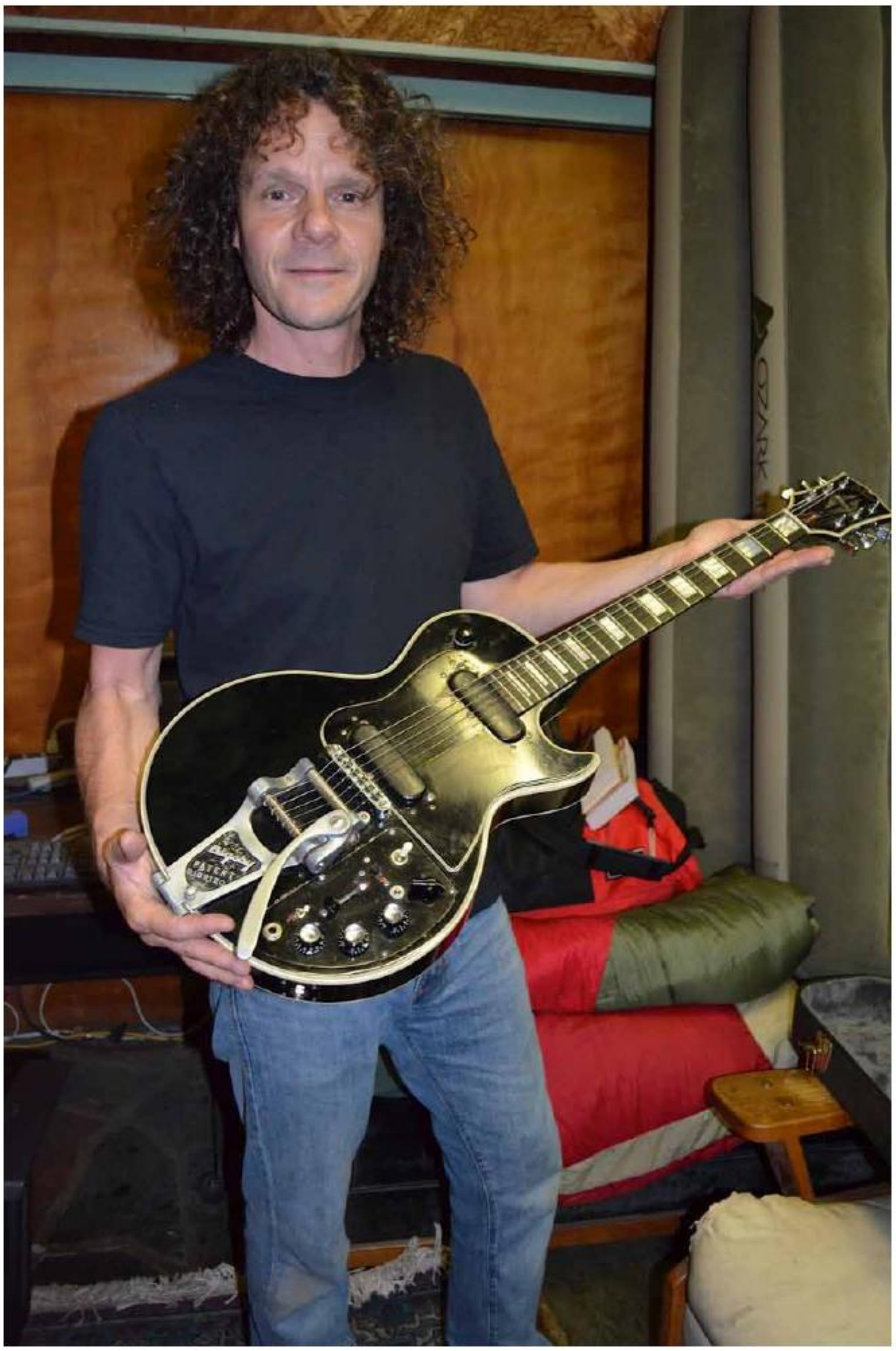
STATE OF THE UNION

by David Belzer

Facts & Emotions

There has been a great deal of controversy over the recent heavily publicized Guernsey's auction of the 1954 Les Paul Custom which had belonged to Tom Doyle, Les Paul's former guitar tech. Thanks to an article revealing the guitar to be "The Grail! Les Paul's 1954 'Black Beauty' The Genesis of All Les Paul Guitars to Come!" and listing a number of other details that didn't quite reflect an accurate account of this guitar, it started a virtual "War of the Roses", or should I say "War of the Pauls?"

The top guys in the vintage guitar world didn't get there by not knowing their stuff, so when claims are made about a high visibility piece, it draws the attention of these vintage icons as well as their commentaries. Then throw in the attention from television, press and the open forums on the Internet and it becomes a free for all of opinions. But opinions are just opinions and I think that in order to discuss this auction intelligently, one must first remember that there are two elements at work here – fact and emotion.



First let's deal with the facts.

Les Paul did not solely invent the Les Paul guitar. Gibson designed the guitar, Les Paul was their name endorsee and he did contribute his input to the design. The Model was named after him. Keep in mind Les Paul and Mary Ford were the biggest act in the country during the early 50's and Les was considered the number one guitar player. During the Julien's Les Paul Estate auction a 1951 Fender No Caster given to Les by Leo Fender sold for over $200k. Leo had gifted this guitar to Les because he wanted Les to endorse his new solid body, but Les was a Gibson/Epiphone guy from the beginning and felt his loyalty was in Kalamazoo.

The Les Paul guitar model came out as early as 1952.

The Les Paul Custom was not the model that the 1958-1960 Les Paul Standard with humbucking pickups evolved from.

Tom Doyle worked as a guitar tech for Les Paul for years. Les Paul gave him a broken Les Paul guitar, which Doyle rebuilt and refinished.

Now for the emotions-

Doyle believes that it was a special guitar to Les Paul. He promoted it as such with the help of his acting manag-

er, unfortunately, with a lot of incorrect emotionally driven information about it. (Tom's manager is known for his legendary appearance on the show "Treasure Detectives" where he became irate when he was informed that his white 2002 Les Paul Custom, purchased for $7,040 at the Julien's Les Paul Estate auction in June 2012, and is pictured on the cover of Paul's autobiography was not worth the half million he was trying to get for it, and that it wasn't a guitar that was all that special to Les Paul to begin with.) I have to credit them both for a great marketing job, even though much of it was based on inaccurate information.

Now let me say that I was honored enough to be one of the four people that went to Les Paul's house, spent a total of 8 days combing every nook and cranny and coordinated bringing his tremendous guitar and electronic collection to Los Angeles for auction. I understand being hopeful for the best possible outcome from the sale. I also understand the task of working hard to represent each item as accurately as possible, using all of the resources available. I was fortunate to have access to several of those close to Paul, as well as numerous handwritten notes, ledgers, and photo inventories to work from. I saw the actual evolution of Les Paul's work, from the "Log" to the many years of Les Paul models that followed. We looked at every guitar at his house and then again after they arrived in Los Angeles.

There were almost 300 guitars at Les Paul's house in every state from pristine to completely hacked-up. Many came with little handwritten notes, almost always written on the back of some little coupon or store ad (Les didn't throw anything away), all telling what Paul liked or didn't like about the guitar. Were these all Les Paul's guitars? Sure. Were they all special to him? Definitely not. Were they all interesting to him? Probably, in one-way or another.

One of the most memorable guitars at Les Paul's house was a black Les Paul Custom built in the late 1950's especially for Les by Gibson. It was built with a flat top just like the Junior and Special models of the time. This was a major feature, which Les thought the guitar should have had from the beginning instead of the carved top Gibson went with. People closest to Les told us that a few of these "flat top" Les Paul customs were built for him in both white and black. We were also told that this particular black Custom guitar was nicknamed the "The Bible" by Les because he said it always told the truth, and that he kept it near the front door just in case the house ever caught on fire, where it was still sitting during our visit, exactly where he had always kept it. This guitar was not in the auction and is still in the possession of the Les Paul Estate.

All in all, the sale of this particular Les Paul given to Tom Doyle has nothing to do with the vintage guitar market. This is a celebrity driven vintage guitar, which without Les Paul's name being attached to it would not be of any particular interest in the "collectiable" vintage guitar market. A parts guitar that's been refinished does not bring much excitement much less dollars. These celebrity guitars sell for much more than the guitar itself would on it's own. The Bob Dylan strat, Eric Clapton's Blackie, and Stevie Ray Vaughn's Lenny are all guitars that sold for high dollar amounts, and that if not for the celebrity attachment would only be worth a fraction of the price they commanded.

Was the Doyle Les Paul Custom, rebuilt and refinished, Les Paul's treasured guitar? It was according to Tom Doyle. Only Les Paul knows for sure.

David Belzer is one of the top vintage guitar authorities in the world, with over 30 years of experience in vintage. His knowledge of vintage guitars is only exceeded by his passion for playing them.

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Sparkleburst Sunday

by Chris Montgomerie

Super Bowl XLIX. Only a few minutes remain in the 4th quarter and my home team, the Seattle Seahawks are looking like they might actually make a last minute come back to pull off a second consecutive NFL championship. As they worked their way back down the field, my iPhone alarm buzzed, reminding me of an eBay auction coming to a close. It was for a one-off sparkle 1960 Fender Jazzmaster that I had been keeping an eye on for some time. The auction had been pre-maturely taken down, and then relisted for "no reserve" bidding. Days prior, the listing had been hot and somewhere around 20 people had pushed the price into 5 digit territory. As the game came down to its nail-biting end, it seemed like all eyes were on the Super Bowl and none were on the Jazzmaster. It hadn't budged. The price was far lower than it should have been.

Any guitar nut that frequents eBay watch lists can relate to following those unaffordable guitars of their dreams. I never actually thought about owning it, or even the prospect of purchasing it. As I watched the time counter inch closer to zero, those cold beers must have been

photos by Joe Riggio

brewing up some liquid courage in my stomach. I threw out a bid for $100 over the current marker then put my phone away in a late attempt of self-control.

Usually, these types of auctions get the most action during their final moments, so I assumed my bid would be surpassed momentarily and resumed watching the game. Well, just like that "Hail Mary" pass that landed and fell right into Kearse's arms, my bid stuck: "Congratulations! You've won! PLEASE PAY NOW". I hadn't even put my rent together yet. To make it worse, I was using my Mom's eBay account and she was sitting right next to me. Now her phone was buzzing, asking her to pony up for this guitar that her drunk and impulsive son had just purchased on her behalf. Looks like I was on track for "Son of the Year". She wasn't exactly thrilled. If looks could kill, I would have been in a body bag. I had some explaining to do.

The Jazzmaster came with a 14 day "No Questions Asked" return policy, so I contacted and scheduled appointments with some well-renown guitar collectors along the West Coast. I needed to make sure everything would be verified upon my return. I talked with Rick King, owner of the legendary Guitar Maniacs, Jay Boone at Emerald City Guitars in Seattle and several others. After letting everyone inspect the in's & out's to their liking, everything checked out. The custom "sparkle" finish being the only debated topic. Everyone had different theories and folklore about these "controversial" finishes. This guitar was already turning into a magnet for some fantastic conversation and the buzz was spreading quickly.

Through the edge wear you can see that the alder body, dated 11/59 was shot (painted) over sunburst. This is widely accepted as common practice for "Custom Colors" in the Fender production warehouse. Standard sunburst painted bodies would often be pulled for special orders and painted over the sunburst to spec. The guitar has a jaw dropping Birdseye maple neck, with the best figuring I've ever seen. The neck lacks a "date stamp" in continuity with other early 1960's slab board necks of this period. As the story goes, Fender stopped dating necks for a brief period because a few employees were substituting the date stamp for their favorite 4 letter words. Date stamps are said to resume a few months later into the middle of 1960.

The neck also measures 1.5 inches wide at the nut; rare for the time period. You can really wrap your hand around this thing for some serious Hendrix style thumb playing while still being comfortable. These necks would later be referred to as the "A profile". Fender has since then sized and termed their necks from A to D, with D being the thickest. Every fender player has their preference.

All of the internal pot codes and wiring date properly. The solders are original, and she lights up nicely under a black

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light to reinforce the era correct finish. Lastly, the guitar had been fit with a cellulose nitrate green pick guard. It has shrunken to be extremely tight over the years, making its removal as nail biting as that Super Bowl.

Typically, sunburst finishes would come with a tortoise shell pick guard to make for that classic Fender look. I have yet to see an original sunburst with a green guard. It's details, especially the thinness in its layering, pin it amongst the earliest of its kind. The combination of the blue to silver sparkle finish combine with its green guard to make something special to be seen in real life. The colors interestingly resemble that of the Seattle Seahawks.

There seem to be two schools of thought when it comes to one-off sparkle finishes. The more common opinion being that Fender never made any sparkle finishes in-house. Instead, they commissioned them to other painting outfits. This explains the auto body shop commissions and some sparkle guitars that have a layer of gray primer under the finish. This one does not. The most common detail to this theory seems to be that Leo Fender was too cheap to buy equipment for a one-off. The paint gun that could throw the type of metal flake paint would have a different style of nozzle, potentially affecting the paint thickness. The thickness of the paint could seem counter intuitive to the thinly coated stock finishes, suggesting that a different method was being used.

The flip side of this theory is that Fender had been painting guitars and other instruments by the thousands since 1946. That is 14 years of painting experience by 1960. It would seem hard to believe that they couldn't paint just about whatever the heck they wanted. The Fender factory is notorious for being unorthodox in its methods, and its record keeping was shoddy at best. We do know that some sparkle finishes were commissioned by Fender to be painted out of house. So, this theory suggests that sparkle finishes were done strictly on a case-by-case basis, and that it's entirely possible that Fender had the capability and experience to paint in house if they liked.

One side note: I have pictures of my Jazzmaster laying on top of a 1964 silver sparkle Fender Rhodes 73 keyboard and it's indistinguishable. The color and size of fleck used match perfectly.

Chris Montgomerie & his Jazzmaster

My conclusion on where this guitar was painted still remains up in the air. I'm still undecided on choosing a side. But, do I really care anymore? No. I no longer think it's a detail worth splitting hairs over. The hand selected neck and minty guard spell it out; there were clearly much bigger plans for this axe than a sunburst finish. Case closed. When every heavy hitting vintage guitar guy you've seen from Seattle to Los Angeles asks to buy it – that's good enough for me. This guitar has brought together some amazing people, conversations and experiences that would not have otherwise happened. For me, the story starts now, and it seems like its 55 years of "sparkle" is as alive as ever. ◇

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STEVE WARINER

by Alison Richter

"I've always got four or five things cooking at once," says Steve Wariner, in what can only be classified as an understatement. At the time of our interview, he was working on the following: a painting for a friend, "two killer songs" that he wrote with Swedish country/rock artist Hicks, whom he met when they both performed at the British Country Music Awards in London, a live album that was recorded at the Franklin Theater in Franklin, Tennessee, during the release party for his latest album, *It Ain't All Bad* [2013], and a greatest hits album. All this in addition to tour dates.

"We're slowly working on the live album to have it ready by the end of the year … maybe," he says. "I don't know what we'll do with it, where it's going to go, or how it's going to be distributed, but it will be in our pocket. It's basically what I do on the road, heavy with my hits, a segment dedicated to my songwriting, songs that other artists have done, and a segment that's a tip of the hat to Chet Atkins. When you see me live, I'm all over the map. There's a whole lot of guitar playing, and I have to brag on my band, because I have great players with me. The greatest hits project is something that I've been working on through the years. Every time I record, I go in and re-cut one of my old hits, so we have a nice collection going of those. We're also talking about going in next month and doing some new tracks. If we do a greatest hits, we might augment it with a couple of new songs as bonus tracks. That's always appealing."

Wariner is a four-time Grammy and CMA award winner who has charted more than 30 Top 10 hits, with 14 of them reaching Number One, in addition to the many songs he has written for other artists. Country music fans know him for his voice and melodies; the musicians in his audience, and across other genres, know him as a guitarist's guitarist. Wariner is a master of the instrument; however, his craft isn't based around hot licks and heavy chops. He's got and can execute both, but his is a more tasteful, melodic approach in which every note speaks and breathes. It's not surprising — he grew up around family musicians, began playing professionally at a young age, and was signed and mentored by his dear friend Chet Atkins, whom he speaks of fondly and at length in this interview.

You made your debut on the Bluegrass Today charts in October [2014] via Phil Leadbetter's single "Hole In The Earth," which you co-wrote. How did that project come about?

Phil called and told me about that. I had no idea. I was thrilled that he recorded my song. He's a tremendous Dobro player

and has won all kinds of awards, including Dobro Player of the Year many times. He cut my song and asked me if I wanted to sing on it. I said, "Of course." I sang the lead, and the next thing I knew I was on the charts. That was pretty exciting.

You're no stranger to the bluegrass genre, obviously.

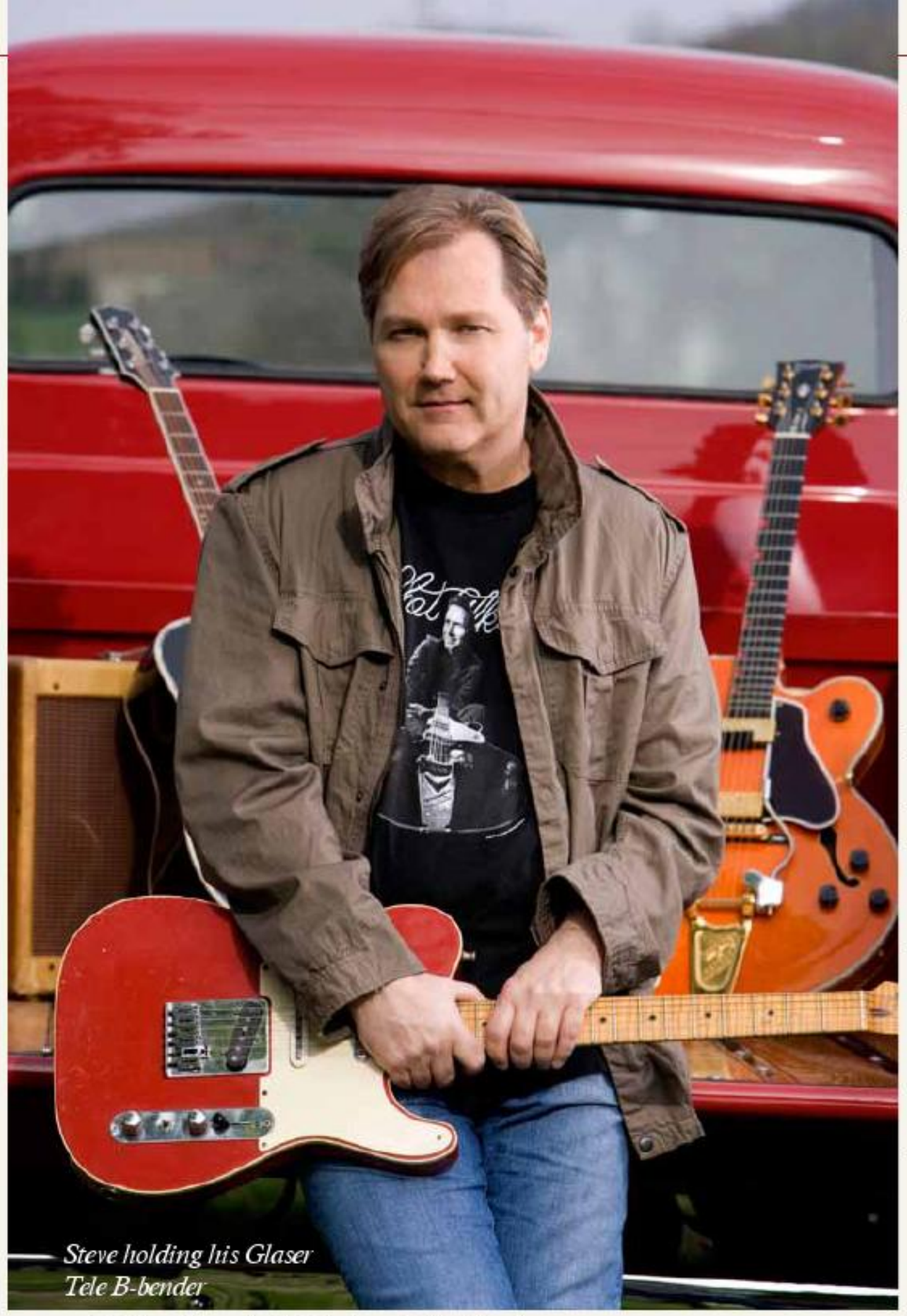
That's absolutely true. Being from Kentucky, I grew up knowing and loving bluegrass. I played it as a kid. As a teenager I always seemed to land in country bands; that's where my heart was, I think. When the "Bakersfield Sound" happened, I wanted to play twangy Telecasters. That was always my love. I think James Burton turned us all into Tele lovers! My dad is an old bluegrass fiddler. He is 86 and doesn't play anymore, but he's still on fire about it. I had two songs on Del McCoury's new album, Streets of Baltimore [released in September 2014], and Doyle Lawson and Quicksilver did one of my songs last year, called "One Small Miracle," and I was thrilled. Firefall, Phil Leadbetter, and other bluegrass artists have cut my songs through the years, but I don't think I've ever been on the charts. I did some stuff with The Grascals; Harley Allen and I wrote a song called "Hoedown in Motown" [Long List of Heartaches, 2006] and it was fun to play on that. I think that was one of the years they won Entertainer of the Year at the IBMA awards. I was proud of that, and I got up and played with them on that show. So I've always been involved in bluegrass peripherally, but I'm honored that as an artist I'm singing on Phil's record.

Do you still feel the bluegrass influence in the music you now record and play?

Yes, I do. My dad had lots of brothers, and there would always be someone at our house playing music and practicing. All I knew as a kid was music, and a lot of it was bluegrass. Bluegrass is all about learning your craft. Any time I played with bluegrass musicians, even as a young guy, I always found myself thinking, I'd better step this game up because everyone around me is playing great. It really pushes you and makes you a better player because the bar is very high: They're going to throw me a solo in a minute, and I'd better be ready and I'd better know what I'm doing. It was always a challenge and that's what I liked about it. I also like the purity of it. Although I kind of straddle the fence on this because I am an effects guy, I like delays and all that stuff, I also love the purity of pulling out a Martin acoustic guitar and just playing. You can't hide behind anything in bluegrass. It taught me at an early age that it's not about anything else but how good you are and how well you play. It's pure and simple and it rides on the musicianship.

You have been playing some more intimate shows in Nashville, including dates at The Hatchery and City Winery. These are basically solo gigs with guests and songwriters. Are you playing acoustic and electric?

At the Hatchery I had a bare-bones band. At the first show, I played about 30 minutes by myself, acoustic, and then I brought out Gordon Kennedy. At the other show, I did 30 minutes alone, acoustic, then the band came out and I grabbed my electric guitar. I had just bass, drums, and keyboards. It was different for me because I'm used to steel,



Steve holding his Glaser Tele B-bender

fiddle, the whole big band. It's fun because it's a challenge, and I'm doing songs that people would not normally see me do. I'm doing my hits, and I'm doing a lot of Jerry Reed/Chet Atkins fingerpicking stuff. On these shows I did a Beatles song, a Glen Campbell song, a Waylon Jennings song. Guthrie Trapp joined me on the last night, and he's an incredible player. My friends O'Shea, a wonderful husband and wife duo from Australia who live in Nashville, also played. We had a Number One in Australia with our song "Bad Day Good." My son Ryan, who is a brilliant guitar player, played with me. We wrote a song called "Sting Ray" that was on my album Guitar Laboratory, and we did that one and some Beatles songs. He plays brilliant slide. I was doing things I don't normally do and getting out of my comfort zone. I played my Strat as much as I did my Tele that night, which is unusual. I usually play my B-bender Tele a lot, but I played my Strat more, which is really cool for me.

Do you rediscover the songs by stripping them down that way?

There's no doubt about it. You connect with them differently. The arrangements are a little bit different. On the road, I play acoustic sometimes, but I'm not so worried about it because there's someone else playing the other parts. There are a couple of songs I don't play on at all in my show. I just sing. Here, you learn it and look at it differently. I like rolling my sleeves up and getting reacquainted with some of the old songs. These events are about that, about having friends come up and play, and people don't know who they will be. I like that uncertainty and spontaneity.

I pulled out some songs that I haven't done in twenty years. I'm grateful that I've had a lot of hits that I can draw from and that are fun to play. I'm lucky that I had great people like Tony Brown, Jimmy Bowen, and Tim Dubois producing me. We picked musical, fun songs through the years and I don't dread them or say, "Here we go again, we've got to do that one."

At the time of our previous interview, you had 125 guitars and 40 or 50 amps. Has that collection grown?

It certainly has. I hate to admit it … or do I? I don't know! A friend of mine named Tim called from Arkansas, I guess a year and a half ago, and he had a good friend that had a '52 Esquire Blackguard that he wanted to sell. I told Tim, "I'm not that interested. I really don't need guitars." He said, "You need to see this guitar. Let me send pictures." He sent them and I called him back: "I need to see this guitar." It was a beautiful, butterscotch Blackguard with the original case, strap and ashtray. As far as I know, it was a two-person owner. The guy's father bought it, he's a pastor in Arkansas, so it was one of those "sitting under the bed for years." We negotiated a little bit and it was a win-win for both of us. It's in really nice shape. It has battle scars, but it's not terribly banged up — just enough scars to be beautiful and gently worn.

About a year ago, my son Ryan, who knows more about gear than I ever will, called and said, "Dad, there's a music store in town with a beautiful '56 sunburst Strat that you need to go play. It's in immaculate shape and it sounds incredible. I'll go with you." Ryan always goes by how does it sound, will you use it, is it a tool, as well as what shape it's in. He's the perfect collector. He looks at every aspect and knows so much about electronics and the history of how it was made, who made it, and the markings to look for in the neck. I met him at the store, we plugged it into one of the new Magnatone Twilighter amps, and it was like butter. It was, "Oh my gosh, thanks Ryan, now I have to have that guitar." I couldn't sleep that night thinking about it! Its original case is that yellowy tweed from the 1950s, and when you flip the latches, they both work perfectly. On Fender cases you hardly see that! I showed it to so many people and they say, "That's a reissue!" No, it isn't. It belonged to a studio player in California who passed away. His wife was selling his collection, I guess, and it was immaculate.

I recently bought a steel guitar from a friend of mine who's had this old double-neck push-pull Emmons since the mid- or late 1970s. He plays a Gibson 355 and he wanted to get into steel, but he never really did it. So those are my new toys.

When did you begin collecting? Was it intentional or just Gear Acquisition Syndrome gone wild?

I think it just happened through the years. I remember standing in Vic Zinn's Music in my hometown. My dad was good friends with Vic, and he would work there on the weekends. Along with his regular job, he would help Vic out a little bit. I would go there all the time as a kid. He was a Fender and Gibson dealer, he had Sunn amps and Gretsches. He had so many great guitars. I remember seeing rows and rows of Strats and Teles and Gibson acoustics. I would stand there and dream and think, I want one of those, and I wish I had that. When I started to be lucky and make a little bit of money on my songwriting, occasionally if I saw a great deal or a great guitar, or something that I couldn't live without, if I had the money I would try to grab it. I always try to be smart about it and grab the ones that are a good deal, a good in-

strument, and stuff that I really can use, like tools. I have several that are kind of tucked away, but a whole wall of them are guitars that I use. I filmed a piece about Chet's 60th anniversary with Gretsch [A Tribute to Chet Atkins, 2014] and they were so kind. They gave me a reissue of a Country Gentleman model like Chet played. I've been playing it a bunch.

If you could only work with one guitar, which one would it be?

That would be a nightmare! Do I pick my dad's Jazzmaster that I learned to play on that he bought brand new? I remember him bringing it home. All my brothers learned to play on it. That would maybe be one of the first ones. Then there's my B-bender Glaser that I've played for thirty years on the road. That's kind of my go-to. Then there's a '56 Strat. That would be really tough. Then the Chet Atkins guitars that Chet gave me through the years. I've got to take those.

Are there certain ones that you always play on albums and on the road?

Yeah, no question about that. Depending on the song, of course. I've got a Del Vecchio that Chet gave me. I play that when I want a certain kind of sound or feel. I've got a little Papoose guitar that Tacoma gave me years ago. I played it on the Keith Urban record and on several things as a textural, almost mandolin-y part. It's tuned up a fourth from a regular guitar. Of course my B-bender. Ninety percent of what I play is on that guitar. It's real versatile. It's got some old Seymour Duncan Hot Stacks that they came out with in the mid-80s, the real hot pickups. I'll play the back pickup for that twangy Tele sound. It's a five-way, so it's almost a Strat sound on a Tele. If I have a sound, that's it, that pickup. So I can either do a Strat or a Tele with that one guitar. I've got a 1967 Martin D-35, and if I play acoustic parts, it's a given I'll play that one.

You are one of Chet Atkins' Certified Guitar Players. When did he bestow that upon you and what does it continue to mean?

It means more each day, each year, that goes by. I miss Chet so much. Paul Yandell was in on the inception of the idea and should have been one of the first CGPs, but he recused himself. Chet's daughter, Merle, posthumously made Paul a CGP and then retired it because she felt it should rest and be left alone. It still means a lot because of Chet thinking enough of me to want me in that little club. He did it as a lighthearted thing to recognize some of his friends, and I truly believe that if he had remained healthy, there would be several other CGPs.

Right around the time when Chet gave me that honor, we were both up for a Grammy Award. I was so excited to be nominated, and then I realized I was up against Chet Atkins, of all people, and as you might imagine, he won. We went to Madison Square Garden for the awards and I thought, We'll go celebrate and have fun; I'm just thrilled to be nominated. A week later he gave me the Grammy. He called my wife, Caryn, and said, "Tell Steve he needs to come down Monday night. I'm playing at Café Milano." He played every Monday back then. He said, "I won a Grammy last week," and everybody clapped. He said, "But there's a guy in the audience that should have won." I saw a couple of guitar players in the audience and I thought, Who is he talking about? Then he said my name and "This guy should have won it, so I want to get him up here. I've got something for him," and he gave me his Grammy. He said, "Folks, you can't give these away. NARAS frowns on that. So I had the plaque replaced and it says, 'On Loan to Steve Wariner from Chet Atkins." It's sitting there with my other Grammys and it means more to me than any other ones. He made me a CGP that night, and that was really special.

Chet was a great man and a great, great friend. I got to know him early on as a record producer, but we never landed on a hit record together. We flirted with Top 30 a little bit with one single, and in the meantime I took off on the road with him and was playing bass, so I was around him a lot, toured with him for a couple of years, and went around the world a couple of times. It was a great experience. He handed me off to someone else after about three singles and I always regretted that part of it, but he is really the one that brought me to make records. I still miss him terribly every day. Luckily, I have this great body of work that he did, and I have three or four songs that I put on when I get to missing him real bad. I'm getting moved talking about this. Sometimes I put on "Vincent," which is one of my favorites. He recorded that about three times, and I just love the last version he did. I sat beside him many nights and watched him play that song. He did a song called "Waiting For Susie B," and I love, love,

Gibson Chet Atkins Country Gentleman [Gretsch Orange] that Chet gave to Steve. [It's the guitar in the foreground]

love that song. I listen to that and "Jitterbug Waltz." He did two versions of that, and I really like the one from Chet Atkins in Hollywood, which he recorded with an orchestra. We used to play that song live and I'm so fond of it.

Cracker Barrel re-released your album My Tribute to Chet Atkins [2009] in their stores. Why the decision to re-release? Is it on your label or theirs?

It was released into Cracker Barrel stores. Caryn runs the record label and publishing part of our business. She took a meeting with Cracker Barrel, and we were talking about different projects for exclusive Cracker Barrel release. The Chet Atkins album was the one they specifically wanted. We have all of my CDs in our warehouse, so all we did was mail them to Cracker Barrel and they put them in their stores. I was flattered. It was on our label, not theirs. It's a really cool thing and we have a nice relationship with them now. They're great people to work with.

Steve playing his Kirk Sand Classic Electric with Chet Atkins playing his Del Vecchio in Austin, TX

Do you sometimes worry that legendary musicians — people like Chet Atkins — may be forgotten by younger generations?

Oh gosh, yes. I think about that all the time, absolutely I do. It breaks my heart when you mention a name and young people say, "I don't know them." They need to know this stuff! It worries me. I'm not picking on anyone, but some of the halls of fame are behind. Jerry Reed is not in the Country Music Hall of Fame. How is that? In addition to his guitar work, he was a brilliant actor. He did so much — tons of hit records, his innovative guitar playing. Not to pick on one hall of fame, but yes, I'm worried that some people will be forgotten, but that's the way it is. Time marches on and young people don't slow down. On the other side of the coin, there are some that know the history, and I love when you find that. They study it and follow it and know where we come from. My big pet peeve now, and it drives me crazy, is when they'll have a young singer who doesn't play an instrument, and underneath their name it says "musician." I want to say "No, no! That's a great singer, but that's not a musician!"

Hence the importance of tributes like the Gretsch documentary.

Absolutely! That was done really nicely and I was honored to be a part of it. I was kind of involved; I helped them put together a lot of that. I think we wound up with a nice bunch of folks that knew Chet. That's the main thing — I wanted people that knew Chet and were close to him and knew what they were talking about. In a lot of cases — this is another pet peeve of mine — you watch a tribute to someone and you know that half the people in it don't know who the person was. They never even met him. You think, Why are you there? Oh, I know why! Because you're real famous and hot at the moment, so they've got you in here.

The documentary was filmed at RCA Studio B. That must have been filled with memories for everyone.

Oh, it was. Being selfish and self-centered for a moment, it particularly was for me. It was great going back there. I had not been in there in years. When I first met Chet Atkins, Paul Yandell took me to him and we were talking about the possibility of him signing me to the label. It wasn't a given. After I met with Chet, we had lunch, we talked for a few minutes, and the second meeting was at Studio B. He said, "I'm going to be working on a project. I'd love for you to come down and let's talk some more. I'll be wrapping up around 3." I walk in the side door and into the control room, look through the glass, and Chet is producing Jerry Reed. I was like, Holy cow! I was 20 years old. Chet introduced me to Jerry that day. There was a guitar and Chet said, "Steve, do that song 'I'm Already Taken' for Jerry." I picked up Jerry's guitar, squatted down, and sang and played. Fast-forward to the year 2000 and it was a hit. It was the first song me and Chet recorded together and it never was a hit for us, but years later, when I went to Capitol via Garth Brooks, I recorded 'I'm Already Taken' again and it was a hit. I said, "Thanks, Chet, you knew what you were talking about."

That day he had me play it for Jerry, it was just the three of us, and I was shaking. Jerry looked at Chet and said, "Damn, Chet, you should sign this boy! What do you want, blood?" Chet said, "Here's what I'll do. I'll give you some tapes" — tapes being reel-to-reel back then — "and you learn a couple of these songs. Pick two or three, we'll go in the studio, and I'll put your voice on the tracks." They were outtakes from artists on the RCA roster and not to ever be released, of course. I learned the ones that fit my key and were good for my voice, we went into Studio B, Chet was behind the control room window with an engineer, and we recorded three songs as a test. That led to him signing me. So yes, walking back in there I was flooded with memories. Everyone who walks in there is, everyone has a story. It's history. They came close to tearing that building down, as they are everything on Music Row. They're tearing things down and building condos. Luckily, a lot of those places are being preserved and saved, and hopefully that will continue.

What became of the tape of those three test songs? Do you still have it?

I have no idea. I had a copy many years ago, but I've moved and moved around so much. I may find them in a box somewhere. I may have to bake the tape and preserve it, if it's not too late. I had them somewhere on reel-to-reel and I would love to have them again. There was an artist named Nat Stuckey on RCA, he was a songwriter and Chet produced him, and I did one of his songs. I remember being scared to death that day, because after we put my voice on those songs, there was a guitar there and Chet said, "Hey, play me something. I hear you play my stuff." I guess Paul had told him. He said, "Play one of my songs." I said, "Are you kidding me?" I think he liked that I knew his music. He also recorded me playing the theme song from Mahogany. That was my test for RCA Records and I guess I passed it, because he signed me.

Your work as an artist extends beyond music. You also paint, and in 2013 you had an art exhibition at the Tennessee State Museum. Is it true that you consi-

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Bootlegger Hounder Guitar

by Bruce Adolph

Only in America… here is the story of a guy who plays blues around Los Angeles on the weekends. He buys lots of guitars and amps (both new and used). He has an audio video production and recording studio in Hermosa Beach, CA (Studio 637) but then he opens up a boutique guitar and amp shop too (Distilled Guitars). To hear Chuck Wilson tell his story you really get the feeling he loves guitars.

Next in his journey he goes to a Winter NAMM Show in Anaheim and meets one of the best Korean manufacturers out there and he decides to work with them to design a line of blues driven guitars.

He brands the company name Bootlegger and to hear Chuck say it, "Bootlegger Guitar is my vision of combining a vintage look with modern playability. We researched vintage styles from Houndogs to Jazz styles looking to recreate that vintage vibe. Muse is a well-known South Korean builder that has and does build guitars for some of the big boys. I discussed my concept with the owner/CEO Mr. Ken Kim and I was excited that he also had a vision of recreating a vintage line… so Bootlegger Guitar was born.

Now an importer of well-priced guitars from Korea Chuck doesn't stop there. He brings in a tube amp line – aimed at the blues player and then he ups the ante on his guitar designs after meeting Julius Salaka, a Master Luthier from Indonesia. Chuck continues, "Julius' company, Stephallen Guitars, makes some of the finest hand made boutique guitars and basses you can find. I had the pleasure of meeting Julius at the NAMM show too. After discussing our concept and designs, he was sold on my idea of creating a vintage style boutique guitar line with the blues vibe. The first batch of this new Bootlegger addition was released last January. We call them "the Select Batch". These guitars have the refined details that only come from being hand built originals. Each guitar is hand signed by Julius and numbered. The one you are reviewing will be just one of four of the Select Batch Hounder's made this year".

This guitar features a solid mahogany wood body with a maple C back contour shape bolt-on neck. A rosewood fingerboard with 20 medium size frets. The bridge is pretty unique, an archtop model rosewood with a heavy duty but stylish tailpiece. The two pick-ups are P-90 style for the neck and bridge positions. There are 5 knobs on this guitar and at first glance it is what adds to the vintage mystique of the guitar… however you start wondering what the 5th knob does… then it dawns on you. It is a rotary knob for rolling back and forth between the two pick-ups… it is your pick-up selector switch in a rotary knob format. Not as quick as a normal selector switch but it definitely has a cool factor.

The body itself is a little elongated and that adds to the vibe. This guitar has some weight to it. Not Les Paul heavy mind you but it has some girth for sustain. The vintage color is a sunburst nitro finish. The fit and finish shines on this guitar. It does feel hand made.

The wood pickguard along the bottom of the guitar that hosts the 5 knobs is really cool. The wood pick-up rings are a nice touch but I have a suggestion for Chuck in this area (it is more fashion than form). I would match the color stain to the pick guard as the rings

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Road Gold: 1941 Gibson Mandolin

by Michael Elsner

Having the opportunity to travel has allowed me to scan for great deals on vintage gear via craigslist and other online forums, however you don't necessarily have to be out there traveling through America to find a great deal. The story of this particular "Road Gold" piece stems from a conversation while sitting around my parent's kitchen table during the holidays.

I'm originally from a small town in upstate NY, and one evening while I was back home for Christmas, while spending time with family and friends, the conversation turned to my travels, and some of the things I've seen, and bought, along the way. One of my parent's friends recalled that she had an old mandolin tucked away in her attic. It had belonged to her husband who passed away over 20 years ago, and it hasn't been touched since. She vaguely remembered it being a Gibson, but she was not 100% sure. This was enough to catch my attention, and I expressed an interest in taking at look at it.

Now, anyone familiar with upstate NY knows the drastic climate changes that occur throughout the year - especially in an attic. Temperatures in the summer can easily get into the 100s with high humidity, while the winters get frigid and cold. An attic is never an ideal place to store an instrument, especially for 20+ years. I was intrigued to find out if it was a Gibson, yet also very apprehensive as to the condition it would be in after having been neglected for so long.

When she brought it by the next day, it in fact was a Gibson, and to my surprise, it was also an electric mandolin, complete with pickup, volume and tone controls. With quite a bit of playing wear and missing the pick guard, it was obviously a well-loved instrument at one point in its life. The spruce top, maple back and sides, as well as mahogany neck, were coated in some type of dark, sticky, grimy film. Parts of the binding along the Brazilian rosewood fingerboard were cracking and coming unglued, however, even with the rusted old strings, it still played well and had a fairly balanced sound.

That evening, I spent quite a bit of time researching this mandolin, and discovered it was either an EM-150 or an EM-125. The blade style pickup is the same style used on the Recording King model, which was a model made by Gibson for Montgomery Ward. I couldn't personally place a date on it, but it looked to be early 1940s. Because of the work that it would need to bring it back to life, I made an offer of $250. I believed that it would cost somewhere around $750 to get it restored, so I thought this was a fair offer. She accepted, and there was a 'new' old 1940's Gibson to place under the tree.

It took a few months to get this guy back into daily playing condition. The first thing I did was polish 20+ years of dirt and grime off the body with Sotheby's Restoration Furniture Wax. Initially the mandolin was a dark brown, but after spending a few hours polishing the body multiple times, the beautiful woodwork, and original sunburst paint job, really shined through.

The next step was bringing it to the Gibson Restoration and Repair shop in Nashville. The work they did was quite spectacular. It's like having a brand new 75 year old instrument. They planed and refretted the fretboard, installed a new bone nut, installed an entirely new bridge, glued and repaired several sections of the binding, and as a surprise to me, they even fixed the original Gibson red line hardshell case that the mandolin came with.

My initial repair estimate that I factored into the price was also very close (only off by $15.00).

The final step in the process was taking it to George Gruhn and having him personally appraise the instrument. During the appraisal, we found out some very interesting facts. The starting date for this mandolin, according to the work order number printed inside the body, was 1937. However, this instrument was made at a time when Gibson was using up leftover parts during World War II, so the final completion date is later than indicated by the work order number. It turns out this is a model EM-125 (the EM stands for Electric Mandolin) completed circa 1941.

This is my third mandolin and it's quickly become my #1 choice for recording and performing. It's already made its way onto quite a number of film and televisions scores. It's a pleasure to play, and has an incredibly balanced tone. This mandolin records well and even when plugged in to a PA it has a very cutting, yet smooth sound.

Like I've said many times, you never know where these gems are hiding. For over 20 years this mandolin was wasting away in an attic, unopened, unseen and unloved, but now it's once again fulfilling it purpose - creating music. It's a wonderful experience to rescue them and give them a new life. These opportunities are out there if you just let people know you're looking. Enjoy your summer and happy hunting!!

Michael Elsner is a guitarist/songwriter/producer whose written for shows including American Idol, Amish Mafia, EXTRA, The Sing Off, and So You Think You Can Dance among many others.
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by Rich Severson

The Dorian Bebop Scale

Last issue we worked on the Dominant 7th Bebop Scale which was a concept to give your playing that old school sound. This issue let's continue with studies of Bebop Scales, an 8 note scale, with the introduction of the Dorian Bebop Scale. This is a common scale used by rockabilly, blues and jazz players. This eight note scale is created by adding an extra ½ step between the b3rd and 4th of a regular Dorian Mode thereby giving it both a minor and major 3rd. Here's the makeup of the scale. For these examples we will use the key of "C". Start with the Dorian mode.

C D Eb F G A Bb C > now add an extra ½ step between the b3rd & 4th
R 2 b3 4 5 6 b7 R

C D Eb E♮ F G A Bb C > now you have the Dorian Bebop Scale
R 2 b3 ♮3 4 5 6 b7 R

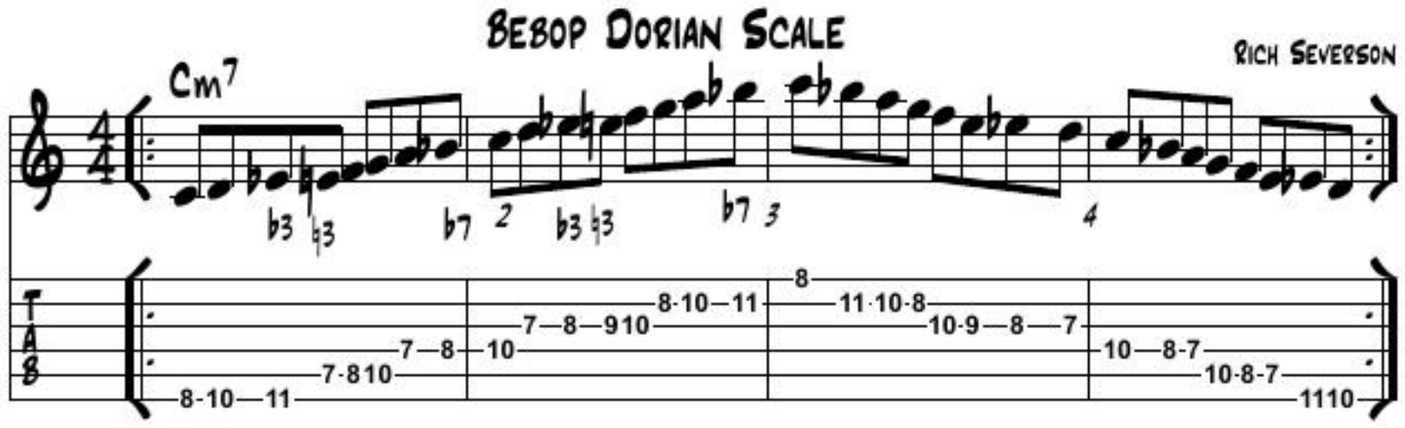
The b3rd can also be thought of as a blue note when using the Mixolydian mode for improv. When we improvise over a blues progression in the key of C and only use the notes of the Dorian bebop scale we get that minor to major sound prevalent in blues, especially old school blues.

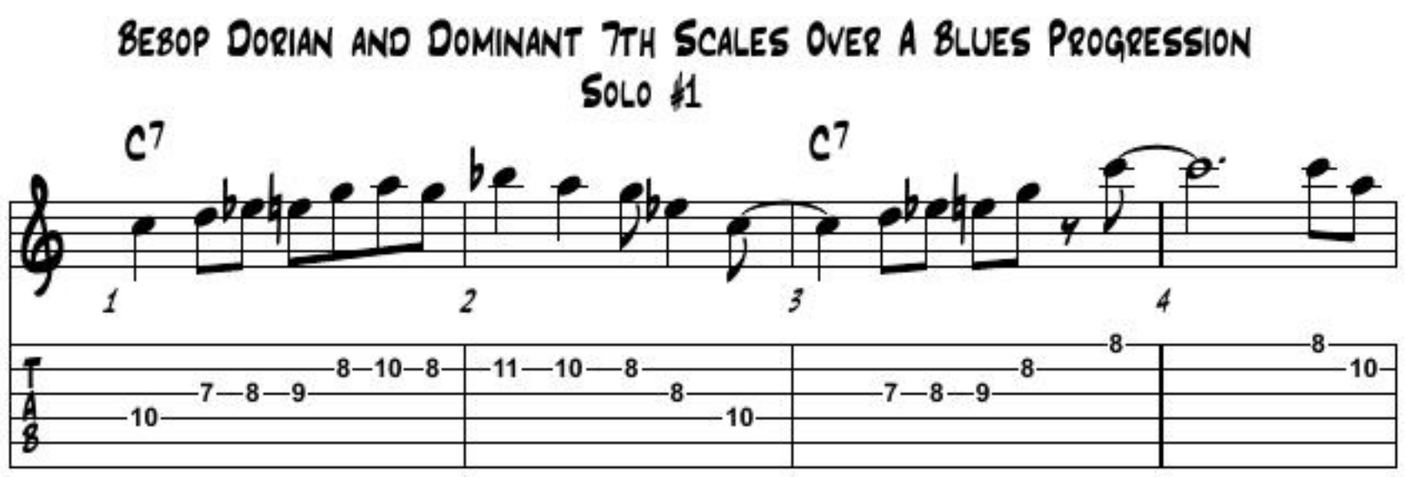
In the solo below we are mostly using the Dorian Bebop Scale however when the chord progression moves to the G7, we switch to the Dominant 7th Bebop Scale. We also "pepper in" that flavor over the C7 as well. This solo should be played over a medium tempo blues shuffle. View the notation on this page.

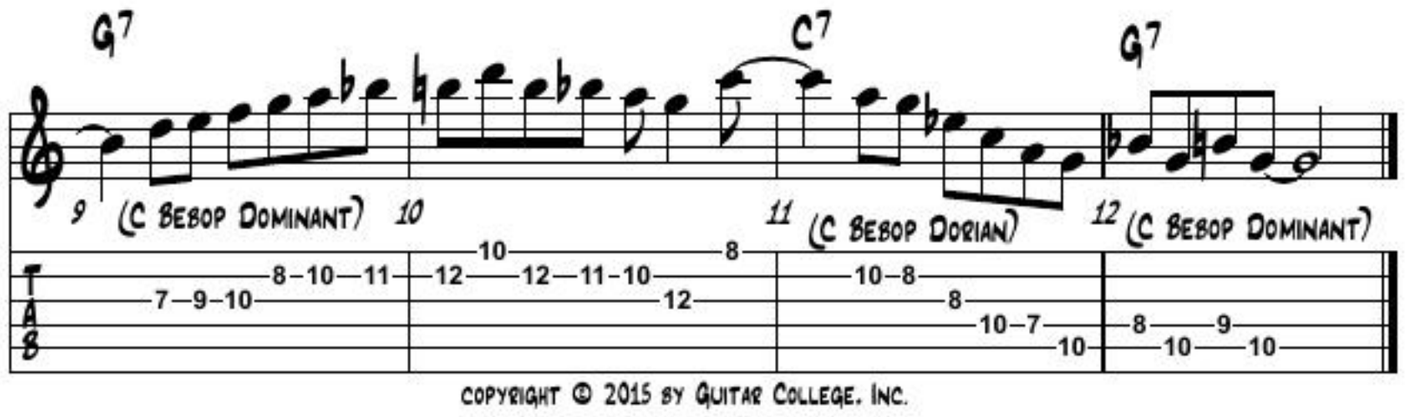
Go to 99CentGuitarLessons.com and click the Blues button and select the Jazzy Blues Solos. There you will find video lessons using bebop scales over blues progressions in "C". Just hearing the lesson demo of this solo can help you get it into your fingers.

Till next time,

Rich







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Rich Severson, guitarist, clinician, author, former GIT instructor and originator of Guitar College and 99CentGuitar Lessons
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"From One Collector..." cont. from page 6

shipped two of them to the Arlington guitar show in Texas and sold them both there. The plan was working and the margins were still pretty good all the way around. Next we started posting them on Reverb.com and I moved five more pretty quickly (which also gave me "Preferred Seller" status with them). Things slowed up some as I was pretty busy in November and December, but the few left kept moving. Just two weeks ago I sold the first Wolfgang to a nice guy in Eastern Washington, and two days later he bought the second Wolfgang from me.

So now, just 8 months later, I am thankful to say that I have sold 25 of the 26 guitars! I just have one Wolfgang left from that large batch of forgotten guitars.

Looking back would I of done anything differently? Yes, I may have kept the N.O.S. Fender Jazz bass. I may have sold a few less to local music stores and held out for selling a few more at a higher profit direct to consumers. However, it was a much more fun adventure with investment monies than buying stocks or bonds that I knew little or nothing about (or getting a very low interest rate in a bank somewhere). I had Joe properly set up each guitar we took in so they would shine their best when being examined by the guitar-buying public.

What I really liked about this for myself was that I got to play each guitar and learn something about each make and model. I got to learn more about vintage instruments in general, and more about some guitars specifically.

I am grateful I had the chance to pursue a large buy like this. It was a win-win for the music store and for me. I'm also grateful that my wife Judy was so cool about it. She wanted to see each and every guitar that came through the door. Her love and curiosity for guitars is not too far behind mine. So here I am, batting 25 for 26 in investment guitar land.

Is anyone out there interested in a NOS flame top Amber 1998 Wolfgang?

I just have one left…

Guitar People Helping Guitar People,

Bruce & Judy

"Gretsch (RED) review" cont. from page 8

Dirty channel, the beast within the G5623 was revealed! One of the many things I loved about this guitar was that it was not afraid to rock. From classic British crunch to sweet solo tones, this guitar did it all. Thanks to the center block it didn't feedback any more than a solid body instrument would have at the volume I was playing–L O U D! Dialing the tone control all the way back in the bridge position delivered a singing lead tone that captured the essence of the guitar melody on "American Woman".

Last but in no way least I was excited to see what would happen when I plugged this his guitar into an AC30. A bit tighter in sound that its Bigsby'd Center-Block counterparts, the G5623 just killed it on this amp. Chime and jangle for days, with a neck pickup solo tone that sounded like the best elements of a Strat, Les Paul, and Gretsch all rolled into one.

Feel

The 1.6875" wide nut made it easy to play open position chords without pulling them out of tune. I would describe the neck as being wide but not super-deep, complementing the versatility of the instrument.

Tone

The dual Black Top Filter'Tron did a great job of capturing the essence of the instrument in a way that translated brilliantly across a broad range of tones and styles.

Controls and Switches

The simplicity of the rock-solid Master Volume and Master Tone controls is something any player would appreciate.

The three-way pickup selector is rugged, making it easy to get to the middle position without losing a beat.

Conclusion

Don't just take my word for it, plug one in, turn it up, and let your fingers do the talking!

MSRP: $1,500

GretschGuitars.com

Red.org

When Doug Doppler is not writing gear reviews, the former Guitar Hero session player and Favored Nations recording artist spends his days, hours, weeks and years demoing the coolest gear on the planet for his web site GearTunes.com.

"Quirky Vintage" continued from page 10

knocked me over. When I say "clean," let me clarify that the tone had a bit of natural "hair" to it anyway. When I added some overdrive and cranked the volume, the guitar began to feed back, perhaps as a result of un-potted pickups. Even with that disadvantage, I finally understood all the fuss and hype about Gold Foils. There were several types of Japanese Gold Foils made in the 60's, but these Zen-On units just may be the best sounding examples. They won me over. If I have to play the guitar clean, so be it, but I think with the correct amount of EQ tweaking and a little restraint, one could overcome any difficulties using fuzz or overdrive. The fact remains that these are not heavy metal shred machines, but who cares? This is a great surf or garage rock instrument.

When the guitar boom went bust around 1967 or so, Zen-On went to acoustic and classical guitars and ceased guitar production in 1969. Today, the company is still in business and remains a music publisher.

Perhaps the only well known rock guitarist who uses an Audition Zen-On is Elvis Costello, who has been well photographed with his. Regardless of celebrity use, this quirky vintage guitar will surely raise an eyebrow or two on your next gig, or maybe a comment of, "What the heck is that?" You should be able to pick up a Zen-On Audition for under $295 at this writing, although prices are steadily rising on this and many other Japanese guitars from the Swinging 60's. Buy while it's still a bargain!

The author would like to thank Pennsylvania collector/dealer Frank Meyers, perhaps the world's leading authority on '60s Japanese guitars, for information on Zen-On electric guitars. Visit his Blog, www.DrowningInGuitars, and buy his great new book, History of Japanese Electric Guitars, published by Centerstream, and available wherever books are sold.

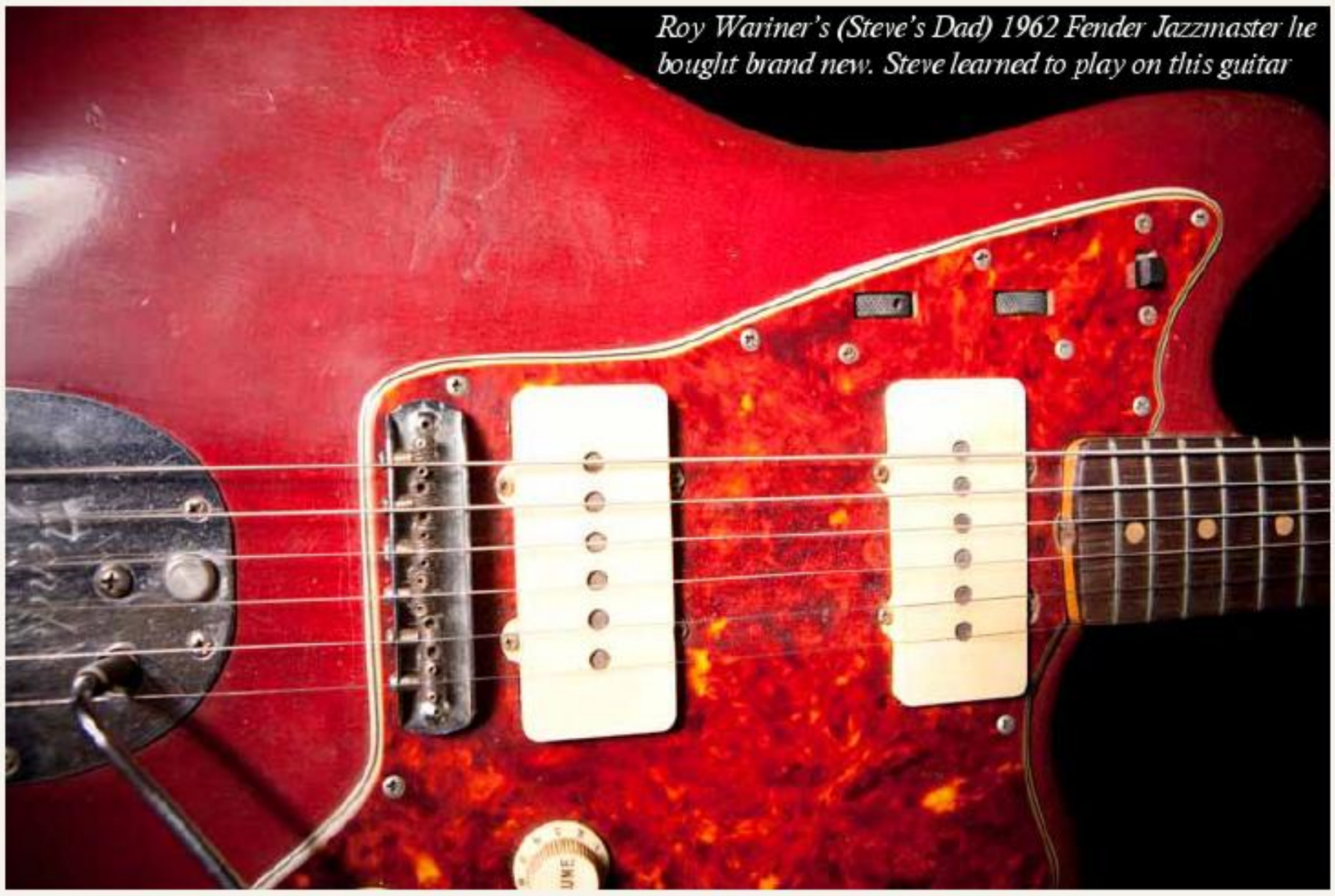
Bob Cianci is a lifelong musician, music journalist, and author of the book, Great Rock Drummers of The Sixties, and has written extensively for many guitar and drum publications, newspapers, websites, and fanzines. He is a working guitarist and drummer in three bands in New Jersey. His guitar collection numbers over twenty-five pieces at the moment, and is constantly evolving.

"Steve Wariner" cont. from page 30

dered painting as a career prior to music?

That was my plan out of high school. I never formally studied art, but I was going to. I was going to go to Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana. I went to school and lived in Noblesville, which is maybe 25 or 30 miles from Muncie. I was lucky that all through high school I had a beautiful teacher, Gordon Morrison, who took a lot of interest in my work. He knew my brothers, he knew me, and he saw that I loved art. In my freshman year he arranged it with the school so that I didn't have a study hall. He let me do art. Once I got to his class, I stayed there for two periods. That was my study hall. We did that all four years of high school. I worked for him during the summers a little bit too. He took me to Ball State University my junior year of high school to look at the college. I didn't have any money, my parents didn't have the money, and I knew I wouldn't be able to go there.

In 1972 and 1973, I started playing music with some friends in Indianapolis, about 30 minutes away, in a place called the Nashville Country Club. They brought in national country acts, and I'd sit in with the band, opening for these artists. They wanted to bring in extra players when these acts were there. One night, during my senior year of high school, Dottie West played. I came down to open the show with my buddies and sing a few songs. Dottie West came out onstage with me before her show and started singing and playing. I heard a girl's voice and thought, Where is that harmony coming from? She hadn't even done her show yet. She invited me to play on her show, so I came out and played acoustic guitar. Afterward, she and her fiancé, the drummer, who was also the bandleader, took me out on their bus and said, "We want you to be our bass player. Our bass player has given his notice. He's going to stay home and be a family guy." I said yes. I drove home 90 miles an hour and woke my mom and dad at 3:00 in the morning to tell them. I can't believe they let me do it. I had about three months until my semester break in my senior year, and I arranged it with my high school that they let me graduate early. My credits were good. I had half a credit for the second semester of government class that I had to finagle and do a correspondence course kind of thing, but they let me graduate early, and luckily my grades were pretty fair. I was 17 or 18 and I took off on the road.



Roy Wariner's (Steve's Dad) 1962 Fender Jazzmaster he bought brand new. Steve learned to play on this guitar

You created a fiberglass statue basset hound for [Nashville rescue group] Old Friends Senior Dog Sanctuary's 2014 fundraising auction. Why that particular organization? Are you a dog person?

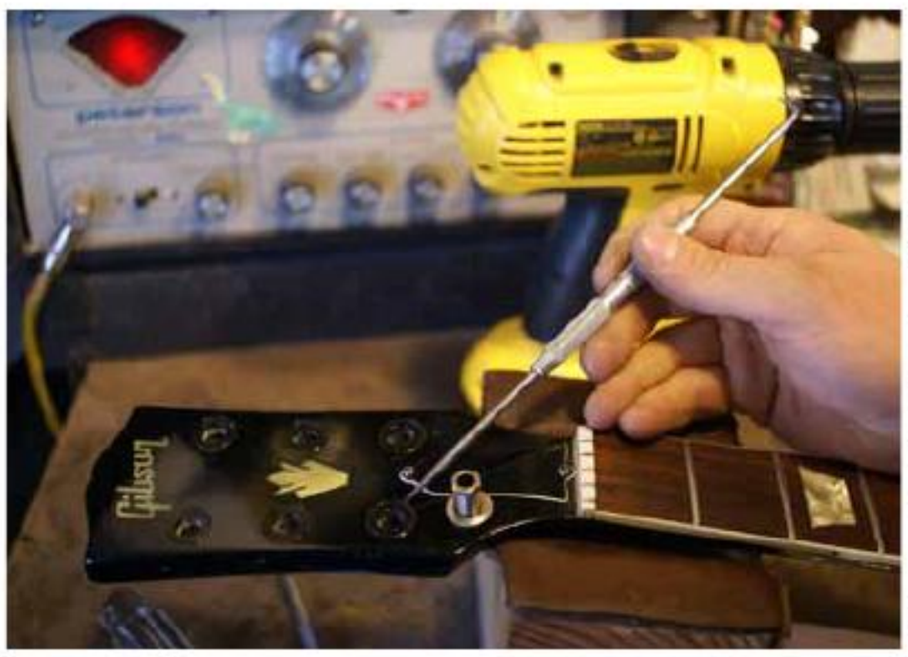
I am a dog person. I love animals. [Old Friends] came to us about a project where several artists were going to paint fiberglass dogs and the money was going to the rescue. They had some celebrities involved too, people like Ashley Judd, who live around here. I said, "Count me in. I love to paint and I love animals, so this is going to be good all the way around." I took pictures through the course of doing it, which they told me no one had ever done before. They liked that. I don't remember how much it brought in, but it raised some money. I picked a basset hound because when I was a kid we had a basset hound named Tinker and he was a cool little dog. So it was a memory from my childhood.

I love dogs, but right now we don't have a dog. Our dog passed away a few years ago, and we haven't had the heart to start again. He was a great dog. I was on tour in Canada and I was coming home the next day. We had just moved to this place, I called Caryn, and as we were talking she said, "Oh my gosh, there's a dog on the back steps. He's a big dog, and he's mangy and sickly and his ribs are showing. It looks like he has a wounded place on his side." She put out food and water for him, and the next day we took him to the vet with hopes to get him well enough to find him a home. We wound up keeping him for eleven years. We got him all fattened up and doctored up. He had ticks, he had buckshot in his side, and someone really abused him. I never fully got him out of it, but if you raised your hand, he thought you were going to hit him. We spoiled him rotten, and one day he began having stomach problems. The vet told us he had lupus, and we treated him for that for the rest of his life. The vet told us that we added probably eight years to his life by caring for him. I was with him when we lost him, and it's one of the hardest things I've ever gone through. We all still talk about him. ◇

Steve with his signature Steve Wariner model Takamine

"WD Music Tuners" cont. from page 12

Grover tuners (note the dent around the washers because of the compression from previous tuners). If the guitar was 100% original and not refinished, installing a set of "off the shelf" replacement tuners may not have been the best course of action, but In this case as the guitar's tuners have already been changed (multiple times) it made sense to install the WD music's replacement tuners (part # SD90SLN DR in case anyone is interested).



As noted above, the original bushings will in this case work. The goal was to make the bushings a little larger than necessary and to use little material as possible (meaning to use the appropriate size conversion bushings). Many guitar techs add a small amount of glue to the conversion bushings to help insure a friction fit as much as possible. Occasionally, if the holes are bad enough, no bushing will work. Then you will need to plug the holes and re-drill them, but that's not the case here. Once drilled out, the holes aligned with tape and the replacement tuners screwed in and our project was complete.

Note: Many guitar techs like to "soap" the screws as it helps with friction and a tight fit (certain woods like Maple makes the installation easier). Many guitars have the screw heads broken off because of too much tension in the installation process.

Ultimately in working with a guitar of any personal or vintage value it's very easy to make a mistake that will in the end cause more problems then it has solved. All of this work described in this article (unless you really know what you are doing and have all the tools to do the work) is best done by a qualified guitar tech.

Special thanks to Truetone Music in Santa Monica California http://www.truetonemusic.com (310) 393-9232 and to guitar tech extraordinaire Alex Alcocer for his technical input and for doing the work on our test guitar. Alex can be reached at http://www.alexalcocer.com/

For more information on WD Music's extensive line of replacement guitar tuners check out http://www.wdmusic.com/ or give them a call at (800) 449-9348.

"All About Amps" cont. from page 17

Should I have it recovered?

Now that's a great question! First, just lie down on the amp psychiatrist's couch for a minute and think about it. I know some people who would be giddy with the prospect of a tweed Deluxe that had enough cosmetic issues to make it affordable for them, and I also know some people who couldn't sleep a wink until they had that baby recovered! Whatever makes you happy is fine.

Occasionally, enough paint can be removed with lots of time and effort to make the amp look a whole lot better, but it will never look really nice. If you are a DIY person, you could attempt stripping the paint or even re-covering the amp yourself, but it is certainly not an easy task. A really expert re-covering job by a pro like Larry Rodgers will certainly add value, and you should recoup all your costs if you decide to sell your amp in the future.

Skip's Tip: I have always said that the Fender Blues Junior offers amazing sound for the money. Recently a customer brought one in and asked me if I had any easy suggestions for mods. At first I said no, but then I took a look at the schematic and noticed that the circuit includes a "bright switch" (as used on many vintage Fenders) that is permanently turned "on." What if we turn that switch permanently "off" instead?

Unplug the amp first, that way there is zero chance of you electrocuting yourself. Dig? If you are not a handyman kind of person with electronics experience, find someone who is, and don't attempt it yourself. Open the amp up and look at the circuit board. Right next to the input jacks you will see a small disc capacitor clearly labeled "C-3". Take a small pair of scissors (or mini wire cutters) and snip the lead at either end of the cap, and don't mess with anything other than the "C-3" capacitor. Check out the tone...wow! It is much warmer and fatter, especially at lower volume settings.

The downside is that it will be a royal pain to re-connect the cap if you don't like it, but if you find the tone of your Blues Junior to be a little on the thin side, you won't want to re-connect it.

Skip Simmons is a nationally known vintage amp repairman.

He can be reached at SkipSimmonsAmps.com

"Bootlegger Review" cont. from page 32

are very light in color and the pickguard is dark wood – just for continuity sake. (Editor's note: Chuck has already committed to doing this on future Hounders').

This Select Batch Hounder plays very well. The fretwork feels great on the hands. The abalone fretboard inlays are a nice touch too. The scale length is 25.5' and the volute at the top of the neck is comfortable.

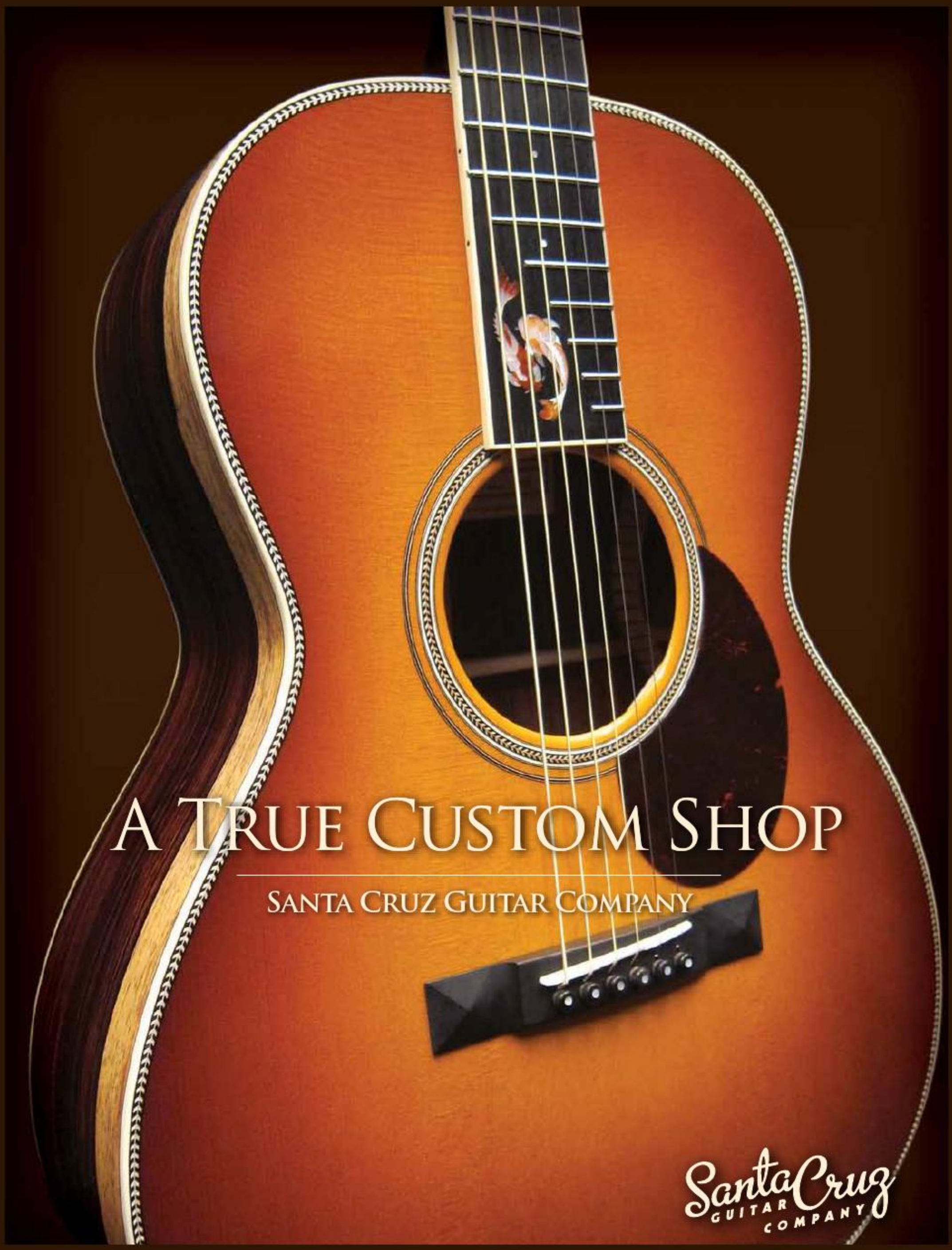
The tone and sustain of the guitar is nice before you even plug it in, and once you do, the P-90 style pick-ups have some bite to them. I had a lot of fun playing the guitar through a good tube amp. It took me a few minutes to work the rotary knob into my thinking, but I did like the sounds I was getting from this guitar.

Pound for pound, you feel like this Hounder had a lot of work put into it for this low of a price tag.

I sure like Chuck's entrepreneurial spirit too. Only in America...

MAP $999.00

www.bootleggerguitar.com



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PEDAL SNAPSHOT

by Phil Traina

Bogner Harlow Boost Compressor
$229.99

The Harlow boost compressor has a different feel than many other boost/compressors that I have played over the years. My first instinct was to see how squishy I could get it and it delivered in spades. The Bloom control offers quite a bit of compression while also adding sustain. The bloom name in and of itself is the perfect description as to what the control does. I was able to get added, almost infinite sustain, if I desired. The level control determined how much boost or volume was added. The tone control let me dial in the perfect sound for different guitars and musical stylings. Use it as a boost with light compression or as a natural compressor with some added umph.

Bogner Wessex Street
$229.99

The Wessex is a low to mid gain overdrive with a wide variety of tones on tap. The controls are very straight forward, level, gain, treble and bass, with an enhancement switch that adds clarity to the notes almost as if you had engaged a boost or buffer. Playing through a clean amp with a tele it was relatively lo gain… it pushed the tone into amp like break up. With a pushed amp and humbuckers I was able to break into more overdrive and saturation. The Wessex stacks very well with other pedals. I chose the Harlow boost and I could turn the Wessex into a fire breathing dragon of rock sensation. Overall like all the pedals in the Rupert Neve/Bogner line the transformer adds some really nice sag and smoothness to the tone. The Bogner pedals are a cool twist in a sea of sameness.

Bogner Burnley Distortion
$229.99

The Burnley distortion is a great take on a British flavored high gain tone. The smoothness and roll off on the Burnley provided were great when using a bright amp. Also, the touch sensitivity, like all the Bogner/Neve pedals have, are welcomed when playing with dynamic pick attack. I was able to get quite a few different tones just by rolling off my volume or lightening up my touch. If you are looking for a big robust heavy OD or distortion, the Burnley may be your ticket.

Bogner Pedals:
sales@BoutiqueAmpsDistribution.com

Decibel11 Dirt Clod
$189

When I first played this pedal at Winter NAMM I will admit I had some skepticism. The Dirt Clod has taken a 100% analog overdrive distortion and paired it with presets and midi control. This could be a OD solution for a player who needs a smaller board or needs to cover many OD sounds in a night. With the 10 available presets it makes it easy to set your desired tones. With 2 clipping styles, I was able to dial in a very tube-screamer vibe, a boost similar to a great DOD 250, as well as some higher gain pushed tones… all with 4 knobs. The Dirt Clod controls are Dirt (distortion), Core (midrange) Crystal Tone, Treble and mass, (volume). Decibel11, known for affordable solutions for guitar players have certainly succeeded with the Dirt Clod.

www.Decibel11.com
Support@decibel11.com

Vertex Boost
$249

Many boost pedals claim not to change your core tone. With practical use most boost pedals do change the character by boosting certain frequencies. After spending some time with the Vertex boost I found it to be one of the truest boosts I've ever played. Robben Ford says it's the most exciting pedal on his board. That is a pretty bold statement, coming from one of the greatest guitar players ever. Other than simply boosting your signal there are a couple other great features. Most noted is the expression pedal input. Instead of having a volume pedal in your chain where you rig sees 2 volume pots, your guitar and the volume pedal. You bypass the volume pedal by using the expression pedal with the boost. It seemed to help with the dynamic control. Now you can set the boost and control your volume with the expression pedal without sucking any tone from your rig. Seems like a win-win. There is also a small dip- switch that changes the function of the expression pedal when the pedal is off. The default setting is the expression pedal works as a volume pedal even when the boost is off. If you are looking for a boost that is true to your original tone, the Vertex boost may be for you.

www.VertexEffects.com

continued on page 46

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1960 Gibson Les Paul Standard Cherry Sunburst

by Norman Harris

This 1960 Gibson Les Paul Standard Cherry Sunburst has a special meaning to me. It is a wonderful guitar in near mint condition, complete with original hang-tags, and a clean brown case. I like to think of myself as using sound judgement in my guitar business. In most cases I have been correct in predicting the future appreciation of guitar values. When I first began buying and selling guitars, the average price for a sunburst Les Paul from 1958-1960 was about $800. This was in the late 1960's and that price seemed outrageously expensive.

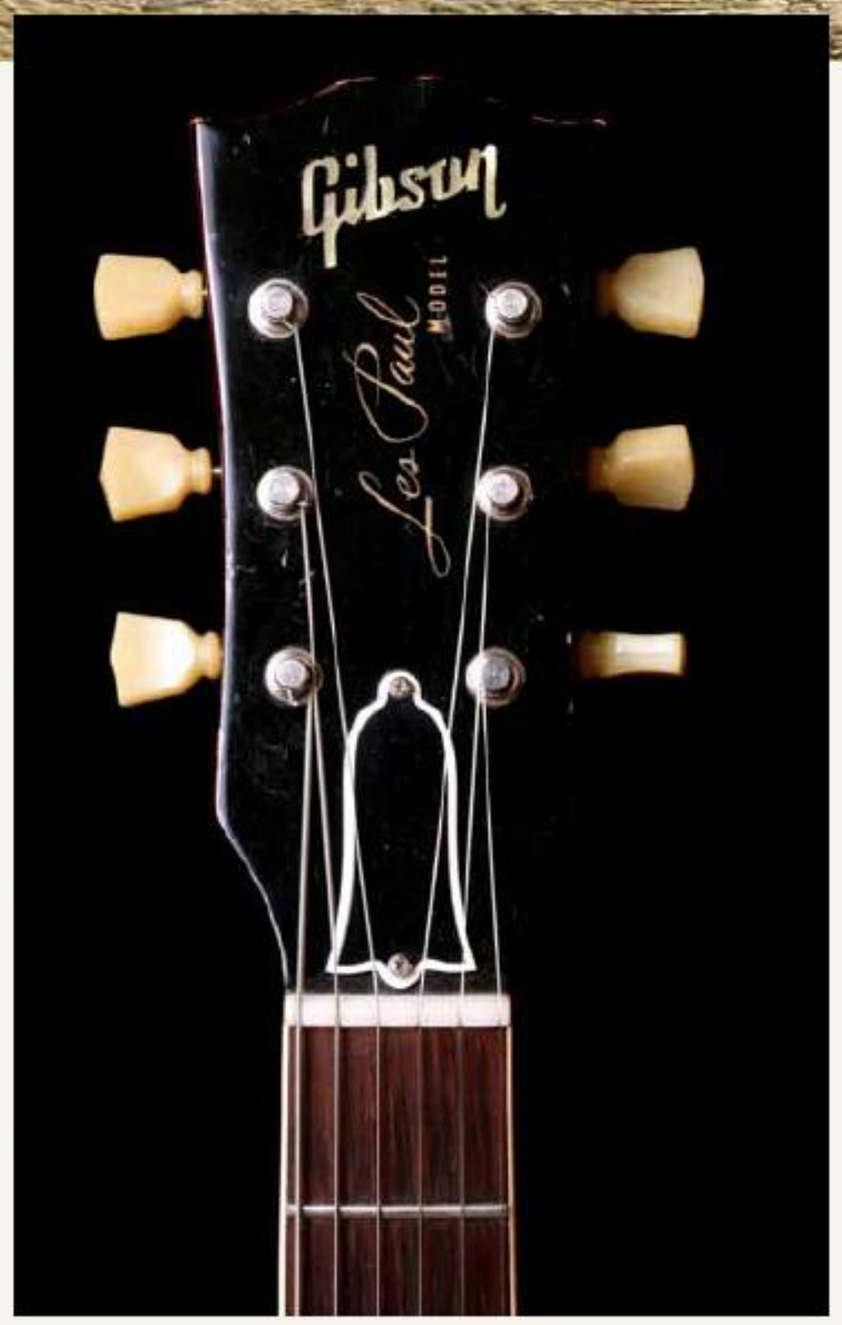
At each price plateau no one was sure if these prices could continue to escalate. At each level players and dealers would gasp at the new price, and as one would sell for $1,500... then that became the new base price. Word got out among collectors that a new price was the norm, and the price continues to grow with each new sale.

At one point I had fourteen late 1950's sunburst Les Paul standards. My personal preference was for the 1960 models. The 1958 models had the largest round necks, the 1959 had still a relatively large neck, but slightly slimmer, and the 1960 models generally had the thinner flat necks. This was my personal preference.

Prices escalated from $2,500 to $5,000. At each point players and collectors took a deep breath and these became the new price. When the price escalated to $10,000 to $15,000 each I began to get cold feet. I thought to myself, "These prices can't continue to go up". And I began to liquidate the Les Pauls' that I owned.

I always loved how this particular 1960 played and sounded, so I said to myself, "This is the one I'll keep". I also felt that by having my money diversified into lesser-priced high quality guitars my money would be safer. As time went on, prices continued to climb, and I was shocked at each new plateau. I thought to myself, "You could buy a new car for this price".

At today's prices, you could buy a house for the prices of one of these babies! In retrospect, my judgement was poor. I did sell these guitars at a tidy profit, but what was I thinking? I can't really complain because with my money I bought and sold some great Fenders', other Gibsons', Martins', Rickenbackers', Gretsches', and the like. At each time I made money, but I just didn't see what was coming. I have friends who made fortunes selling these old Les Pauls', but I did miss the boat!



Over the years I have brought, and brokered many other flame top Les Pauls', but when I was sitting on 14 of them, I just became too nervous. In today's market, these guitars are selling for between $150,000 and $500,000. What is remarkable is, these guitars are actually selling for these prices. They have attained an art status. They are actually functional art.

This guitar remains as one of the fourteen I had at the time. This guitar is a reminder to me that sometimes being patient is better than jumping the gun. I'm not complaining mind you, because I have done very well over the years, but my judgement has not always been sound.

Norman Harris is owner of Norman's Rare Guitars in Tarzana, CA. He is also author of "Norman's Rare Guitars" Book (a must have for every collector). Be on the look out as Norman is working hard on his second book scheduled for release mid 2015.

Sound Synergies® Penetrating Conditioners & Lubricants

by Mike Fitch

Overview

Contaminants and corrosion can compromise your tone and degrade critical components. SoundSynergies® (SS) products are made to condition and lubricate a wide range of musical instruments in order to optimize and protect sound quality and playability. I tested three of their products in my project studio, and then spoke with musician, sound engineer and researcher Dean K. Hart about SS.

Studio Test

I applied STRINGToneTM, made for guitars, basses, and other string instruments, on my Martin DM acoustic guitar, wiping the strings and fretboard down. The grime and gunk that accumulated on the cloth was impressive. Strumming a few chords, the sound seemed richer and more present than it had been before treatment, particularly in the mid and low registers. The strings' tactile response felt extra sensitive to plucking and hammer-ons.

Next I tested PROcussionCareTM on my Rogers snare. The chrome shell cleaned up without appearing highly polished. I tried out a few strokes and rolls. The stick rebound felt lively and the sweet spot seemed extra-large, sounding fatter and less choked closer to the rim. I then treated my age-darkened, stick-marked K Zildjian ride cymbal. Conventional cymbal cleaners strip the surface for a brilliant sheen – PROcussionCare instead lifted away obvious grime while preserving the surface patina. The cymbal felt very responsive and sounded brighter without losing its dark, smoky overtones. When it came to my PDP kick pedal, its already smooth and quiet action seemed to free up a bit more as the product worked in.

I applied LECTRICareTM to my amp and mixer, treating all the pots, cable tips, and jacks. The switches and faders lost any trace of stiffness or resistance. Electronic gear can be problematic, and it makes sense that LECTRICare's promotion of better metal-to-metal contact and anti-static properties would help to ensure that everything runs smoothly.

Mike Fitch: SS products create a micro-lubricant barrier film on treated surfaces. How does this enhance an instrument's sound and performance?

Dean Hart: The product reduces surface tension on metals. Its flexible film boundary penetrates wound strings down to the core, and is self-leveling – it doesn't build up after multiple applications. The particles are micro-sized, and that's part of the film's ability to penetrate very small areas. SS "loves" metal surfaces and with guitar strings that have lots of surface area, we're getting improved sustain – the strings actually resonate longer. It essentially improves the acoustic energy of the string.

MF: How do SS products differentiate themselves from other musical instrument conditioners on the market?

DH: One of the compounds is a dual-purpose lubricant and corrosion preventative; another is a specifically-purposed corrosion inhibitor; a third compound is a high-load carrier with high-lubricity boundary lubricant properties; and four-X has an extreme corrosive environment protector.

SS is balanced for each instrument type. STRINGTone removes oxidation and corrosion. PROcussionCare is a high load-bearing formula for high-impact drums and percussion. LETRICare is a coating-oriented formula that's very rich in corrosive protection and promotes stable electrical conductivity. BRITETone, for brass, is for higher-lubricity needs, close tolerances, and high-loads. SS products also prevent electrostatic build-up.

Other products, made of silicone or liquid Teflon, don't self-level–they may end up migrating and cause problems, and wear off quickly so you have to keep re-applying.

MF: How exactly do SS products penetrate and lift away dirt and contaminants?

DH: The carrier, the active agent in removing oxidation and corrosion, does not act with chemical action – it displaces. It actually penetrates underneath surface contaminants and corrosion particles and lifts them away. Its job done, the carrier then evaporates, leaving your instrument dry to the touch with no sticky or wet feel. Once that's accomplished, the micro-film establishes a long-lasting surface bond.

MF: Have tonal improvements been verified with lab tests?

DH: I tested various stringed instruments using used strings, with some degree of corrosion and oxidation. In my recording studio I digitally sampled electric guitars and mic'd acoustics, and after establishing a base reference level, measured the responses using a spectroscope, which shows a continuous graphical representation of the sound spectrum. I overlaid the treated string results over the untreated string results. On some models the improvements were more subtle than others, but I measured striking improvements in the classical guitar, mandolin and most especially in the fundamental frequencies of bass guitar.

Bass String - Detail (image 1)

Exposed String Core - Mag. X20

The engineered complexity of a

continued on page 46

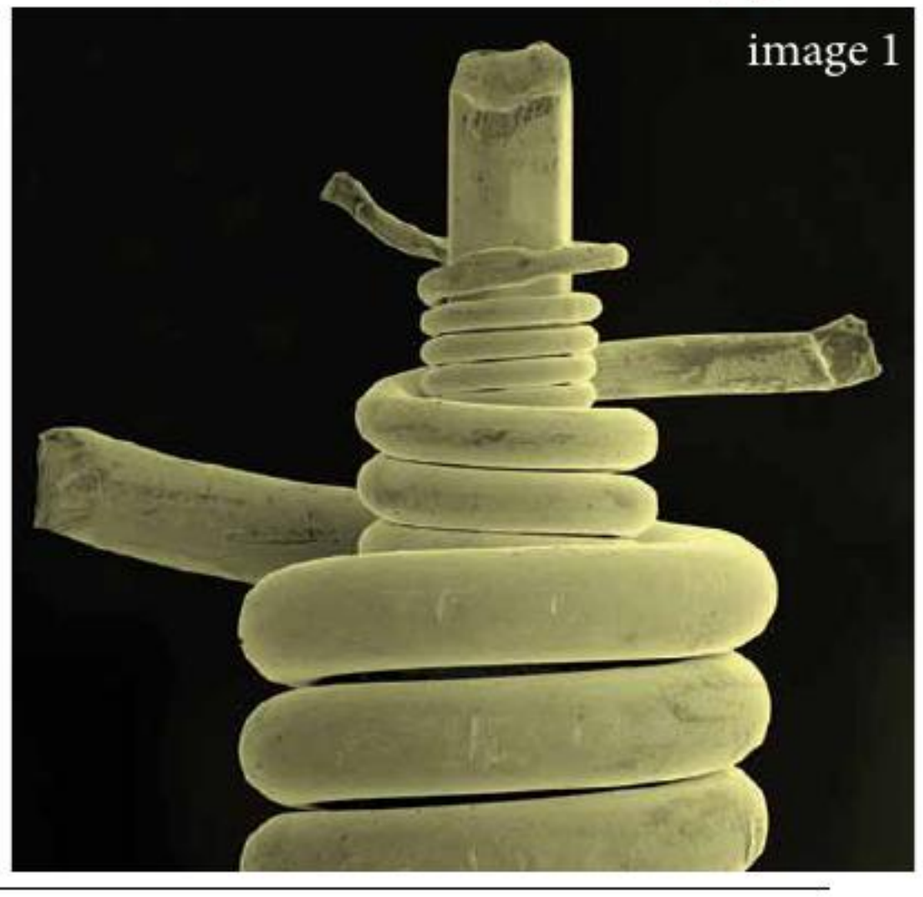


image 1

"Pedal Snapshot" cont. from page 42

Stephen Douglas Design
Green Shadow
$150.00

This is Stephen Douglas Designs version of one of my personal favorite fuzz pedals, the Burns buzzaround. The major complaint we hear about the original buzzaround is that it's too loud! Stephen Douglas added a master volume. Now you can dial in the perfect about of buzzy fuzz and get the perfect volume with your rig. One of the great perks of this design is the mid range punch. The Green Shadow cuts through the mix like a knife and cleans up nicely with your volume backed off. If you've never played this type of fuzz you have to give it a try. It can be in your face yet dynamic. It can be a mild fuzz or over the top. Great fuzz box!

www.stephendouglasdesign.com

Diamond Pedals Counter Point Delay
$279.00

From the creators of some infamous delays like the memory lane and quantum leap comes the Counter Point Delay. The Diamond guys are packing some new and very usable multi-delays. Mode one has up to 600ms of delay time. The guys at Diamond use a smearing technique to wash out the notes a bit more. Mode two is the galloping 8th notes with the multi tap function. This mode gives you the feeling of using multiple delays at the same time. Mode three is the ambient setting. I found when I played staccato the delays were a bit broken up, but when I lightened up on pick attack or played open chords and arpeggios the setting shined. It really filled out the sound and space. Mode four has up to 1.2 seconds of delay. This mode is based on the tape echo sound. You can get long warble broken up delay times or crisp clean repeats. Boasting a tap tempo the ease of use is great. I was able to pull a bunch of different delay vibes out of the Counter Point. This isn't your typical delay. While I could get sounds I was used to from Diamond I was able to get much more with the additional modes.

email: info@diamondpedals.com

Phil Traina, The Gear Concierge
Helping guitar players get the tone they've been looking for. Living the dream in Northern California with his wife and kids.

"SoundSynergies Review" cont. from page 45

bass string illustrates how important STRINGTone's penetrating action can be in the effort to maintain and condition strings for sound and longevity.

Used String - Before treatment
(image 2)

Between string coils - Mag. X60

Shown below; sound-dampening grit and grime that causes wear and drains life from guitar strings.

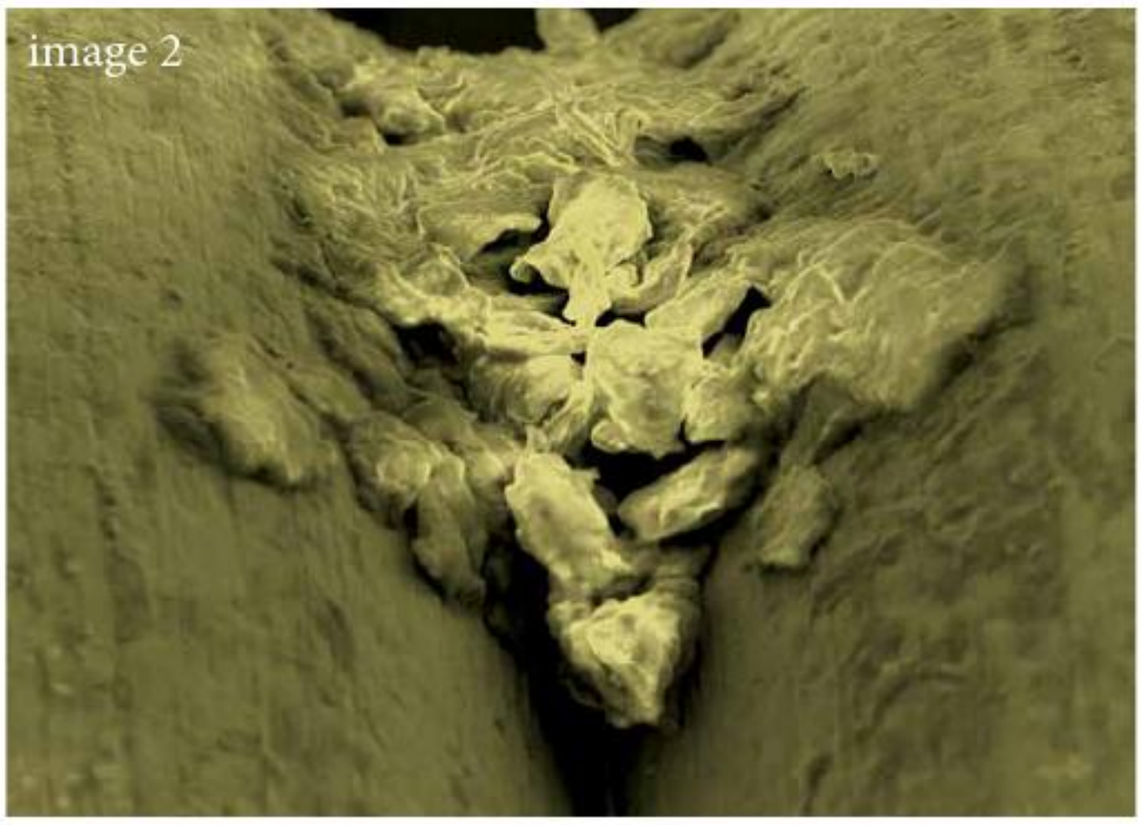
Used String - After treatment
(image 3)

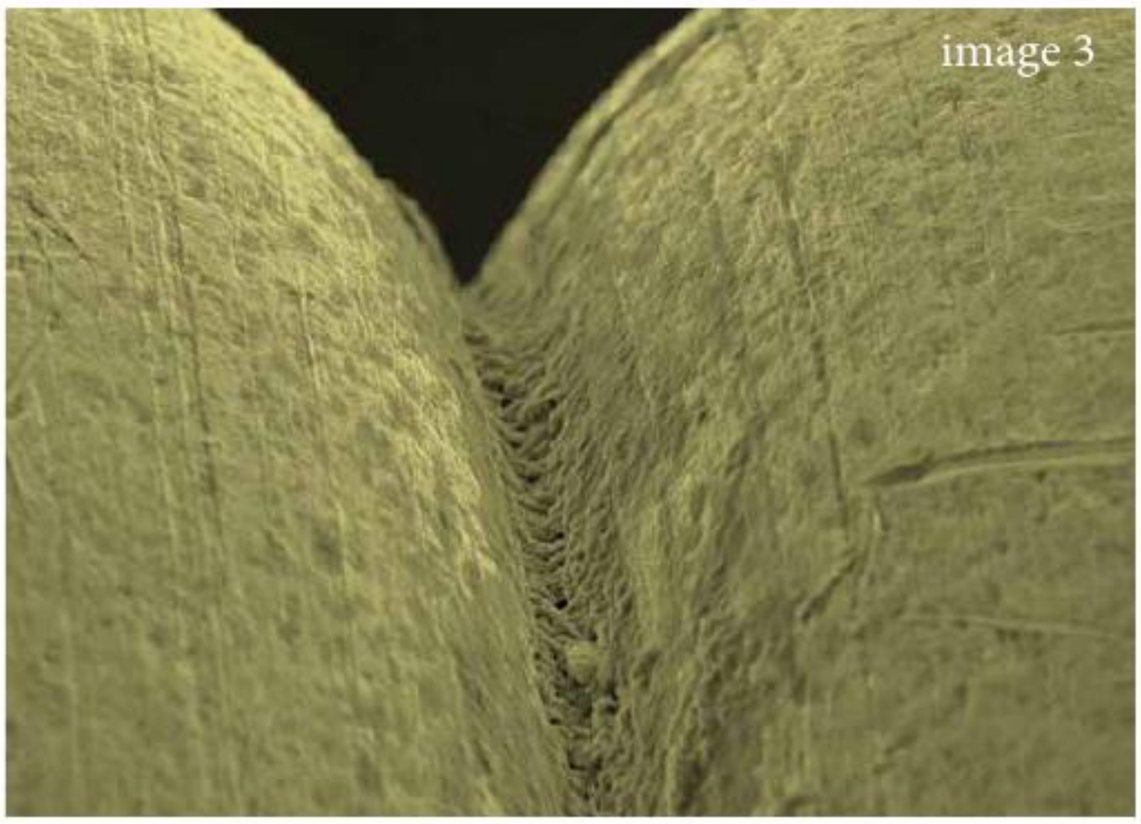
Between string coils - Mag. X60

STRINGTone lifts away contaminants to restore string tone and sustain while conditioning to protect.

Note for all images #1-3 *SEM images have been color enhanced

Mike Fitch has been a professional musician in the Pacific Northwest for over 40 years, and is also a copywriter and graphic designer.





The Majesty of the JHS Unicorn Pedal

by Eric Dahl

JHS Pedals (based, designed and built in Kansas City, MO) has created their own unique niche in the world of pedals by chasing tones and effects that bigger companies won't and distilling them down into a simply no-nonsense user- friendly effects unit.

This time Josh Scott, owner of JHS, and his team decide to pursue the elusive effects provided by the Uni-Vibe units of the late 60's. All of us are familiar with the use of this effect through such recordings as Jimi Hendrix "Star Spangled Banner" and Pink Floyd's "Breathe" but it can also be applied to other classic tunes by Credence Clearwater Revival and Eric Clapton. The JHS Unicorn pedal is a 100% analog signal path Uni-vibe Photocell Modulator pedal with the edition of Tap Tempo!

The review pedal looked like a simple two footswitch stomp box, but don't let JHS's minimalist creativity fool you about what is inside and the mythical tones it can conjure. From the attached image you can see it has two footswitches the left for bypass on/off and the right for tap- tempo which adds to the flexibility when playing live with it. Knobs include a volume for output, depth for intensity of the effect, speed for faster/slower (it will override the tap tempo) and ratio - which controls the rate of tapped speed allowing faster times with fewer taps! The other controls include input jack, output jack, tap/expression jack, toggle for dry or wet, internal switch that gives you control over tap/expression for that jack and power input for 9v DC.

The Unicorn is one of those pedals that you could sit for hours with trying out different distortion pedals in conjunction with it, guitars and amps. But that being said, straight out of the box and plugged in, I couldn't find a bad sound in it. Automatically I pulled up every Hendrix song I ever covered, then I covered some Zeppelin, Clapton, CCR, SRV and then back for more Hendrix. Compared to actual Uni-vibe pedals I have played in the past the JHS Unicorn is much warmer and fuller across the guitars tonal spectrum. Some of the originals tended to provide more effect to the mids and highs and virtually extinguished the bass frequencies; this pedal does not do that. The speed rate control is nice but for gigging and recording I think the tap tempo is the best option that JHS updated this pedal with. Plus, the dry/wet mini toggle really lets you tweak the tones to the song you're using it for and doesn't make this a one trick pony!

I like to do my research on music gear before I even plug or play something and I highly recommend you spend some time on the JHS pedals website. The videos linked to the Unicorn are incredibly funny and you can purchase the illustrated book "The Rarest of All" that completes the set. JHS didn't just copy a popular guitar pedal from the past they brought it to the present for today's players by adding more tonal shaping and tap tempo. Like all JHS pedals, it's built to take the abuse of live gigs but is also artistic in its clean and simple layout. To capture one of these Unicorns for yourself, visit your local music store or you can find them online for $299. This mythical beast could easily become one of your favorite pedals from warm vibrato to soothing chorus. Can you conquer the Unicorn and ride it into tonal bliss?

www.jhspedals.com

Eric Dahl resides in Nashville TN with his wife and daughter. He is the author of "B.B. King's Lucille and the Loves Before Her" and he does a weekly TV gear review show called the FOX 17 Rock and Review.

Grundorf's G-GSC Guitar Stand Case & GDV-4616S Display Case

by Bruce Adolph

The Grundorf company has been around for 30 years now. They are known for their versatile rolling rack mount cabinet and case systems used by touring companies, mobile churches etc. and they also make world class touring keyboard and guitar cases. So when I heard that they had two new products for the guitar market I called them up and said, "Send them to us!"

The first product up for review here is the G-GSC guitar stand case. It is made for the gigging guitarist who has several guitars with him/her on stage or in the studio. You can configure any combination of acoustics and electrics as the plush foam bottom panels strips are moveable. The stand has six slots (you can see from the photo that with a large acoustic guitar like a Gibson J200, I got two acoustics and three electrics to fit nicely).

The G-GSC is well thought out, as the lid of the case becomes the back and the stand insert latches to that back to provide stability. Smart thinking Grundorf!

This multiple guitar holder is also a good thing to have in the home for one central place to grab your guitars for practicing. Plus if you are the type of guy who has a lot of guitars on hand this does hold several instruments all in one small foot print (less space than 6 single collapsible stands would take up). Storage of guitars can be a challenge for some fortunate folks out there who have more guitars than lawn tools and this stand is a compact answer to that need. I test drove this unit at a bluegrass festival I was exhibiting at and it held six electric guitars for me just fine. I like the look of the G-GSC and you feel like the finish of your guitars will be well protected too. The leather snaps that help your guitar stay in place are a nice touch.

Weighs 21 lbs. 24" high. MAP Price $249.95

The second new item from Grundorf, the GDV-4616S, is all about presentation and preservation of your fine electrics or smaller body acoustics. If you want to showcase and protect your favorite guitars then this is for you. This display case fits guitars up to 3.5" tall x 46" long x 16" wide (a dreadnought acoustic is a hair to wide).

It mounts on your wall so now your guitar is not only great art but also off the floor and out of harms way from young children, vacuum cleaners and large dogs with wagging tails. If you want to make a statement with your guitar and keep it dust free then this is the way to go. I really like the dust free part.

I see a secondary use for vintage guitar dealers to place their most expensive guitars in it laying flat on a display tabletop. When you look at the quality of this unit, you will know that something valuable lies within. Also you need to unlock two latches to open the plexiglass top and that sends a good message not to touch the guitar inside unless you are invited to… that is a good thing for high-end vintage guitar dealers needs.

The rich blue color fabric interior is pretty to look at and it showcases your own guitars finish nicely. The exterior finish is vintage black vinyl. Black steel corners and latches finish out the stylish look of this case. Pretty cool eh?

Weighs 20 lbs. MAP Price $369.95
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VIEW OF THE DAY

by Dave Cleveland

Mike Payne, Session Guitarist

Hey there View of the Day-ers!

Good to have you stop by the page again.

This installment of View of the Day finds me working with one of my fellow guitarists, Mike Payne. If you don't know that name, you certainly have heard him play.

He has recorded with artists such as Luke Bryan, Francesca Battistelli, Toby Mac, Jeremy Camp, Colton Dixon and many more.

Mike is an absolute tone connoisseur. He always has a great sound and great parts to contribute to the session. I have been thankful to work with him now for many years and have really learned a lot about music from him. We had a few minutes to sit down and talk the other day at The Poole Room studio between tracks. Hope you enjoy!

DC: What got you into guitar?

MP: My granddad played guitar and it just seemed like I always gravitated towards the instrument. I grew up listening to Chuck Berry, Keith Richards and a lot of 60's pop music. My dad always had the radio tuned to the 60's station. George Harrison was also a big influence. I'm from Rockford, Illinois. That's also the home to Cheap Trick. I went to an Awards show and saw them play. Rick's (Rick Nielsen) playing just knocked me out. I feel that was a pivotal moment. It made a pretty big impact on me as a guitar player.

DC: What led you to Nashville and doing sessions?

MP: There was a guy in my church, Dwayne Barker, who had a studio and played around town. He was the local guitar guru guy. He invited me to the summer Namm show in Nashville. That totally blew my mind. The quality of players there was pretty unbelievable. Around that same time I met Kenny Greenberg and Pat Bergeson. They were influential in me coming to town. I also had 2 years left of college so decided to move to Nashville and finish at Belmont.

DC: What were some of your first gigs in Nashville?

MP: The band I got my first break with was, The Paul Coleman Trio. I went out with them for a full year. I learned a lot about traveling and playing from being in that band. They were real specific about nailing the parts every night and it really taught me a lot about dialing it in. The guitarist on that record was Adam Lester, he is way into the Edge and that opened up a whole new world to me. The Edge was a player I had kinda missed early on. And then I toured 5 years with Matthew West. During that time I started to transition into doing sessions.

DC At what point did you stop touring and just do sessions?

MP: It was 2009, Matthew was gearing up for a big tour and I felt it was my time to say "no" to the tour and focus on studio work. I honestly just trusted the Lord and said, "Alright, here it is"…. so I stepped out and gave it a shot.

DC: When you made the move to full time sessions, what gear did you use?

MP: I had one board. It was "the rig". On it I had a dyna comp, the green line6 delay, a few overdrives (sparkle drive, fulldrive, rat and maybe a tube screamer).

The first amp I purchased in town was an amp I got from Chuck Denny. It was a 1996 Matchless DC-30. I also picked up a Naylor amp. Those 2 amps went everywhere with me. Those 2 amps were great solid tone platforms for me.

Today I'm using a Morgan RCA 35. It's an American style amp that I use all the time. Whenever I don't use the cartage company to move my gear, I take that amp with me.

DC: That brings up another question. What guitars do you feel are "the must have at all times", Guitars?

MP: Well, Tele, Les Paul, 335. Sometimes I'll swap out the 335 with a Gretsch.

DC: Tell me about the Tele you play.

MP: A guy in Washington state makes the Tele I play. His name is Joe Riggio.

He's a great guitar builder; he builds guitars that have a classic feel to them. They feel like old instruments when you pick them up and play them.

DC: What's the model of the one you play?

MP: It's called a Tango. Mine is Butterscotch with a black pick guard.

DC: How does the Tele fit into what you do?

MP: The Telecaster has been around for so long and been a part of so many genres of music: Mike Campbell, Bruce Springsteen, Danny Gatton and guys like James Burton, Brent Mason. It's such a versatile instrument. If I had to take one guitar to a session it would probably be a Tele.

DC: Does the Riggio Tele inspire you?

MP: It absolutely does! It is one of those guitars that fights back… I string mine with 10's and it's kind of a beast. It makes you work for it but with great reward.

It really brings out your personality.

DC: I agree, I think a tele brings out the real character of a player. Have you been happy with your Riggio and would you recommend his guitars to other players?

MP: I would absolutely recommend Joe to guys that are looking for really great guitars with great feel. Joe is one of those cats who will work and work and work until he's got it down. He won't be happy until it's right. He also does a lot of custom builds.

DC: Mike, It's been great talking with you but now the producer is looking at us and wanting us to get back in and play the next song! So, anything you would like to say as we wrap it up?

MP: Practice! (lol) I would say to players out there to listen, and listen very carefully.

Figure out how to play the songs that you love and why you love them. As you do this, your ear will get better and your playing will improve.

Dave Cleveland is a session guitarist from Nashville. He's recorded for Miley Cyrus, Martina McBride, Stephen Stills, Judy Collins, Whitney Wolanin & Girls Generation. He recently wrote the tv theme for Mud People and Mustang Millionaire.

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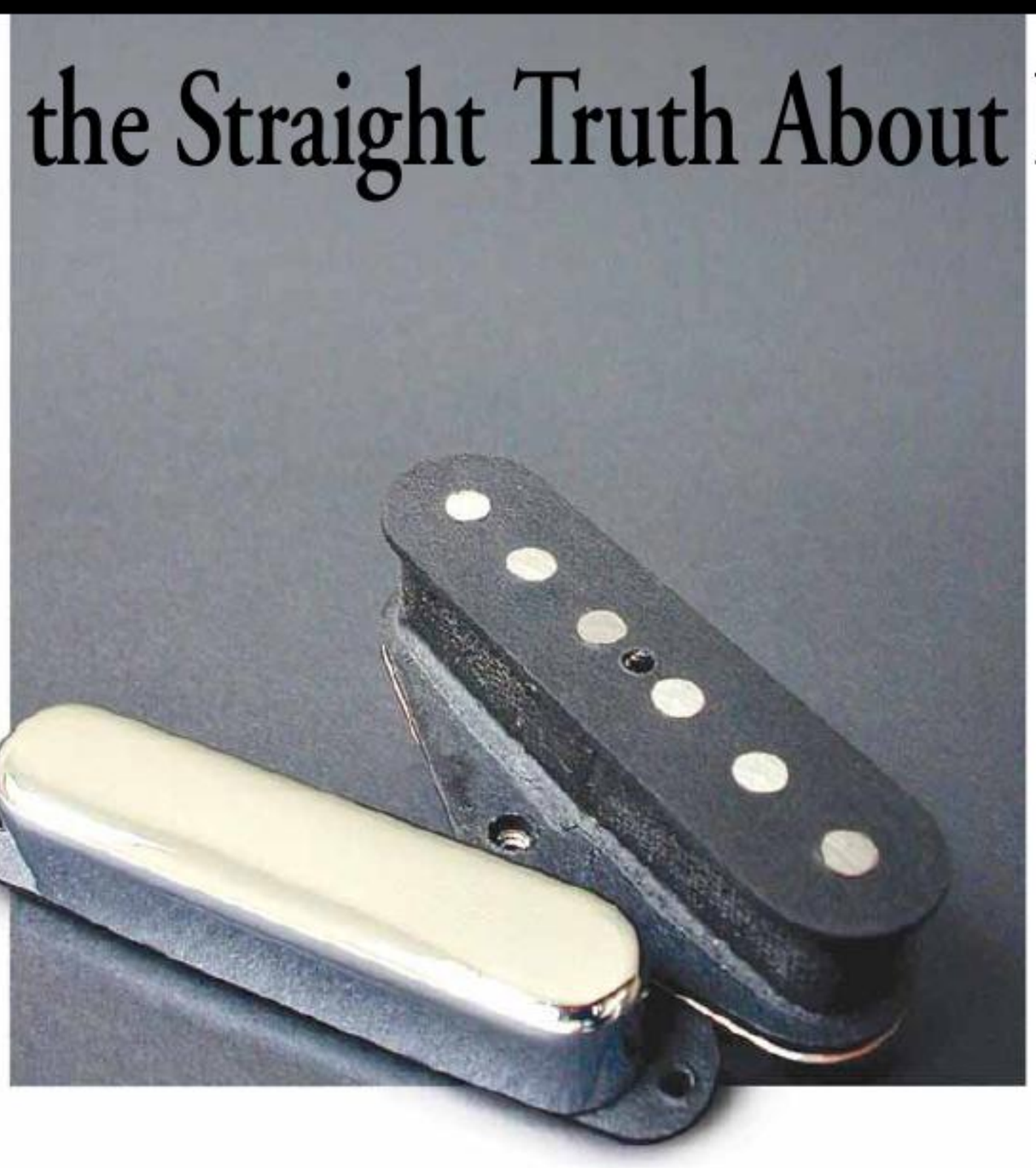

The "magic" found in some (but not all) classic vintage pickups was created by accident. Don't let anyone tell you different. And over time, some pretty stellar accidents happened. The only way to recreate that magic is to study more than a few exceptional examples of all the classic pickup types, while acquiring a thorough understanding of exactly what materials were used and precisely how each pickup was constructed and wound. Only then is the "magic" repeatable, if you are willing to spend the time and money required to chase the dragon. I am.

I personally design and wind over 30 different pickup models, including all the vintage classics, many obscure works of art known only to lap and pedal steel players like Robert Randolph, and even a few of my own designs that never existed in the past.

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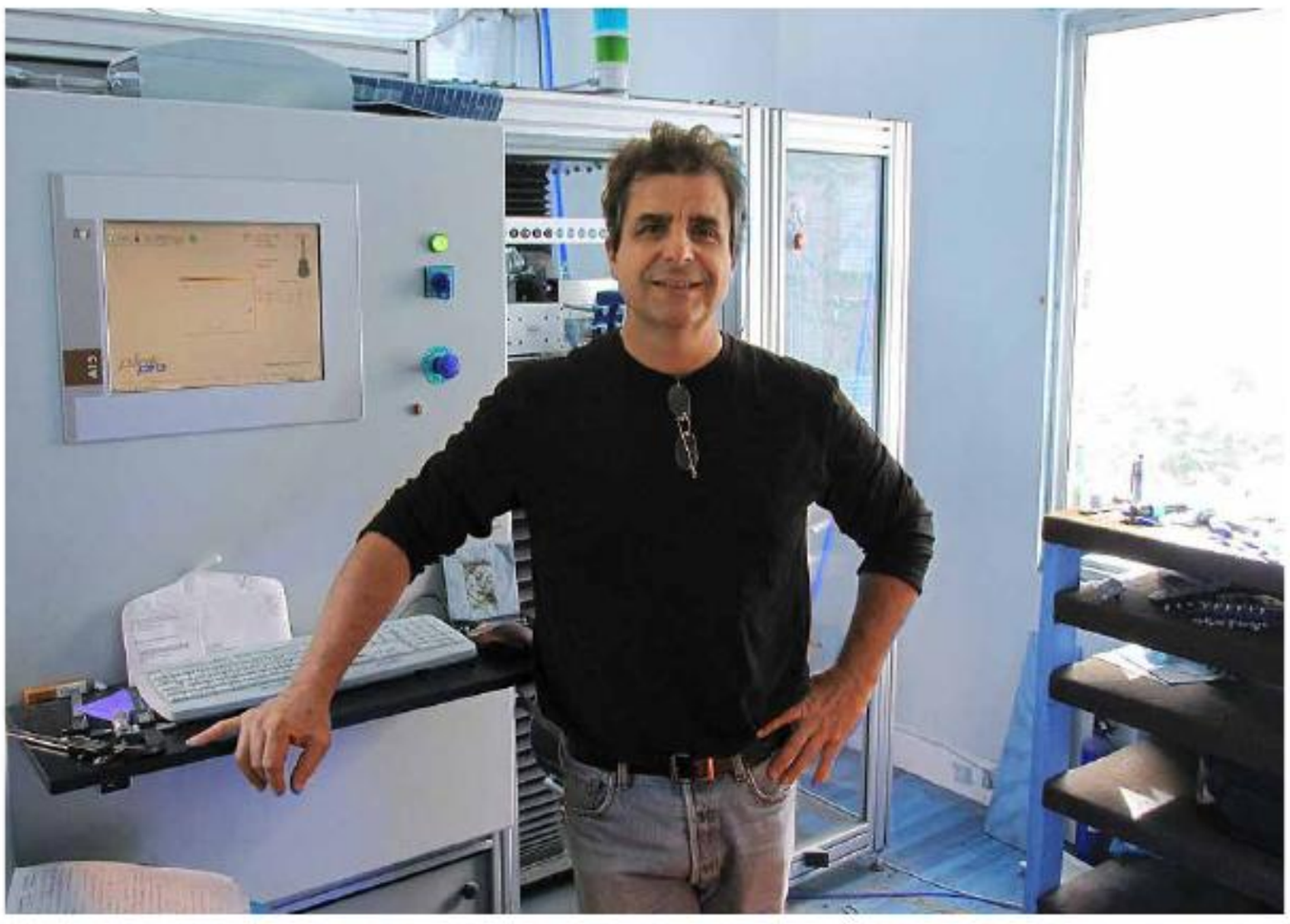
Nashville's Joe Glaser: A Study in the Fine Art (And Science) of Fixing Guitars

by Gabriel J. Hernandez



When you meet someone new in Nashville, the "question" usually comes up within the first 10 minutes of conversation, and it goes something like this, "So, what brought you to Nashville?" The most common answer usually revolves around the city's ever-burgeoning music scene, which dates back to the 1800s – and possibly earlier, depending on the source.

Whatever the inaugural date, there's no denying Nashville has definitely earned its nickname, Music City U.S.A., having grown from a foundation built primarily on and around music – which still remains the common thread connecting the life and soul of this great city and its people.

So it's not uncommon to meet people who have moved here with the hope of making their dreams come true as successful songwriters and/or musicians, or even those wanting to make a name for themselves as engineers, managers, agents, producers, guitar makers, luthiers, sound guys, etc. Nashville is full of hopeful, creative people of all types, shapes, colors and sizes. And in a way, this is still one of the main attractions of this great American city – the diversity of its people, and the places they all come from.

Instrument builder and developer, business owner, entrepreneur, part-time musician, and world-class luthier Joe Glaser is all of the above, and then some. If Nashville held a contest for its poster child, Glaser would almost certainly wind up at least a finalist for the title, if not the ultimate winner. But the reality is that Glaser didn't necessarily move to Nashville to "make it big". Granted, he definitely had success on his mind, but one must remember that success comes in many different forms.

When Glaser first arrived here in 1979 from Palo Alto, California, he was following his dream to build great guitars. And as the son of two groundbreaking and highly successful physicians, Glaser's upbringing and background truly instilled the fundamentals that set him on a path to success – whether it was building guitars, starting new companies, or anything else he would eventually set out to accomplish, and succeed at.

"My parents were people that really believed in people using their brains to get ahead in life", Glaser said. "And that's what I've tried to do… use my brain."

Currently, Glaser's most visible role is as the owner/proprietor of Glaser Instruments, located in a small suburb of Nashville called Berry Hill – which also happens to be home to world renowned Blackbird Recording Studio and The House of Blues Recording Studios complex, among quite a few others, all within a stone's throw of the front door to Glaser's shop.

Yet Glaser's guitar repair business only scratches the surface of the many "hats" this man currently wears – and has worn since hitting the scene here some 36 years ago. As already noted, Glaser started out building guitars. Today he not only owns and operates Glaser Instruments, he also has a stake in several entrepreneurial ventures, including SpendSetter – a company that specializes in brand optimization and development – and Flo{Thinkery} – still another marketing and brand development company that specializes in the building of "products, brands, and businesses as big as the inspiration behind them."

But there was also a time (long ago) when he was making ends meet by playing the occasional gig as a pedal steel player for the likes of Ray Kennedy, The Judds, and the usual Nashville mix. But more than an intended career, playing the pedal steel also served as a lucky necessity to support his more serious guitar building habit.

"I was already building Telecasters out in California, but when I got here I really concentrated on them", Glaser said. "The first few I made were solid wood, with glossy thick finishes, and double Benders. And then I used this wood called Swamp Ash that I bought by chance at a hardware store to quickly test Bender prototypes. While Fender used Swamp Ash in the 1950s, no one was using at the time, and it was very lightweight. I sprayed hardly any finish on these prototypes, since nobody was going to see them, and out of the blue they were fat and woody and sounded like a million bucks. So I sort of did an about face and starting making them out of this very lightweight wood, or lighter Alder, with very little finish at all.

"And then I met and talked to Chet Atkins about making pickups and using certain combinations of pickups, and he asked me about installing a sliding pickup. He suggested – correctly – that the tone of the pickups had as much to do with where the pickups were placed in the guitar as anything else", Glaser said. "So I put a pickup on rails and experimented with this, and some different pickup combinations, and about this time I met Brent Mason and we became friends. His idea was to modify his old Tele with a mini-humbucker in the neck position plus a single coil in the middle that he could blend with the bridge position. Brent built a sound

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"Nashville's Joe Glaser"
continued from page 52

around that, and the rest is history.

"We later changed the bridge pickup, first to the Duncan Alnico 5/2, an idea I had that I had fooled around with on electric mandolins and suggested to Seymour. And now Brent has the Duncan Vintage Stack, I believe".

The guitar Glaser made for Mason – along with another one made for Sid Hudson – was, of course, the very first "Nashville" Teles, but it was Fender that would eventually trademark the name, introducing their own version of Glaser's and Mason's vision in the mid-1990s. Glaser, however, had moved on long before Fender coined the name, continuing to set the bar even higher for his own innovative efforts. He continued his experimentations with the B and B & G Benders – which came to be known as the "Glaser Benders" and were completely built by his own hands. And the Telecaster-style body, eventually coming up with a somewhat "mini" Telecaster-style mandolin/guitar with five strings and a "Glaser Bender" for another good friend, the legendary Ricky Skaggs. The result of this experimentation became known as the "Mandocaster," which Skaggs has continued to play throughout his career. Glaser was also very interested in "Dano-style" six-string bass guitars, and produced several dozen for various artists until Jerry Jones – another Nashville guitar builder – started specializing in them. But where did Glaser learn all of these skills to make such innovative and ground-breaking products and musical instruments?

"Before I came to Nashville I worked for a Silicon Valley company that made focusing magnets for particle beam accelerators", Glaser said. "That's where I honed my skills in the machine shop, the paint shop, got into drafting, into coil winding, etc. That's also where I got interested in how pickups worked, how they were made, and making my own pickups."

Yet while making guitars, pickups and benders would seem to have kept Glaser as busy as a stump-tailed bull in fly season, that's just not the case. His first shop was located in his own house. Then in 1983 he moved into an old laundromat building in Leiper's Fork, Tennessee, a small rural village about 45 minutes southwest of downtown Nashville. Soon after, with his Nashville customer base continuing to grow, Glaser worked out a deal with Nashville's Corner Music (a few minutes from Music Row and downtown) for office space to work and meet clients from. He would travel to this office at least twice a week until 1993, when he moved into his current location in Berry Hill. He's been there ever since, continuing to expand both Glaser Instruments, and the scope of his market and clientele.

A major part of his growth efforts occurred in 2002, when he became a partner with the PLEK company, A+D Gitarrentechnologie of Berlin, Germany. Unless you've been a deaf hermit living under a rock for the last 20 years, you already know that PLEK machines pretty much revolutionized the art of dressing the frets on any guitar. They were developed by musician and guitar instructor Gerd Anke and his partner Michael Dubach in 1990. Glaser became involved with the company in 2000, and two years later solidified the commitment by becoming a full-time partner, acting as the company's engineering consultant and business development person, among various other roles.

"The one thing I love about the PLEK machine is that I can actually show the customer what's going on", Glaser said. "We can take someone in and show them how the guitar is scanned, and where the high and low frets are. This justifies what needs to be done. It's very important for any customer to understand what their guitar needs, and if we can show them and explain it to them then that's a great thing.

"It's no different than going to a doctor or dentist," Glaser continued. "That's what I expect when I go to a trusted specialist. I expect them to tell me what's wrong and what I need, as well as get an explanation as to what's going to happen and why it's going to happen."

This common sense philosophy, combined with the latest technologies available and one of the best team of guitar repairmen in the country, are the main reasons Glaser Instruments comes up in most guitar repair conversations in Nashville… although he's also built up quite the following among scores of industry giants, and around the world. On any routine day in his shop you'll see guitars belonging to the likes of Vince Gill, Keith Urban, Joe Bonamassa, Tommy Emmanuel, Peter Frampton, Chris Thile, Jake Shimabukuro, Willie Weeks, Bela Fleck, Joe Perry, Brad Whitford, Johnny Hiland, J.D. Simo, etc. The list literally goes on and on.

"I think the most important thing in this business is doing or accomplishing what the individual person wants", Glaser said. "In a way, it's just like restaurants. You ask a bunch of people which restaurants are the good ones and you'll get a lot of different answers. There's also a lot of hype involved, and you have to be cautious about it. But you also have to take a chance and try. So in a sense, I'm not against people trying other people out if they don't like what I did. But that's why I keep good records, so I can go back and see what we did, how we did it and, most importantly, why we did it that way. That way the next time they come back we can look at all of that and make additional decisions based on that information. We can then convey what we think and see if they listen to what we're telling them, and if they listen to us.

"The most fundamental aspect about my philosophy is that every customer is different, and we try to personalize the treatment of each one. And not because we're trying to kiss [bottom] … it's simply because every customer is different," Glaser said. "Think about it … no two people like the same food or the same clothes. Same thing goes for their needs and the expectations of their instruments. We do work for famous people, and people ask us all the time to do stuff for them like we do it for the famous people. Unfortunately, their style or level of playing may prohibit this, so we do our best to try and individualize what we do.

"We also listen to how they play and how they describe what they want, and then try and interpret what they want. When they say something like, 'I want no buzzing,' or 'I want low action,' you have to think about what that means to them. And then once we decide what to do for that customer then we have to figure out how to make it happen, and that comes down to the skill of the guitar guys," Glaser said. "It really is art and science laced together. But it's not all art and it's not all science, so the ability of any shop to understand this, and where to use the different aspects of it, is what separates the great ones from the not so great ones."

Gabriel J. Hernandez is the owner of Blues Vintage Guitars, Inc., a shop in Nashville, Tennessee, specializing in the buying and selling of vintage and newer high-end guitars and gear. Hernandez has played guitar since the age of six, and been fascinated (some say obsessed) by the instrument – and music in general – ever since. You can reach him any time at 1-615-613-1389, or visit his company's web site at www.bluesvintageguitars.com.

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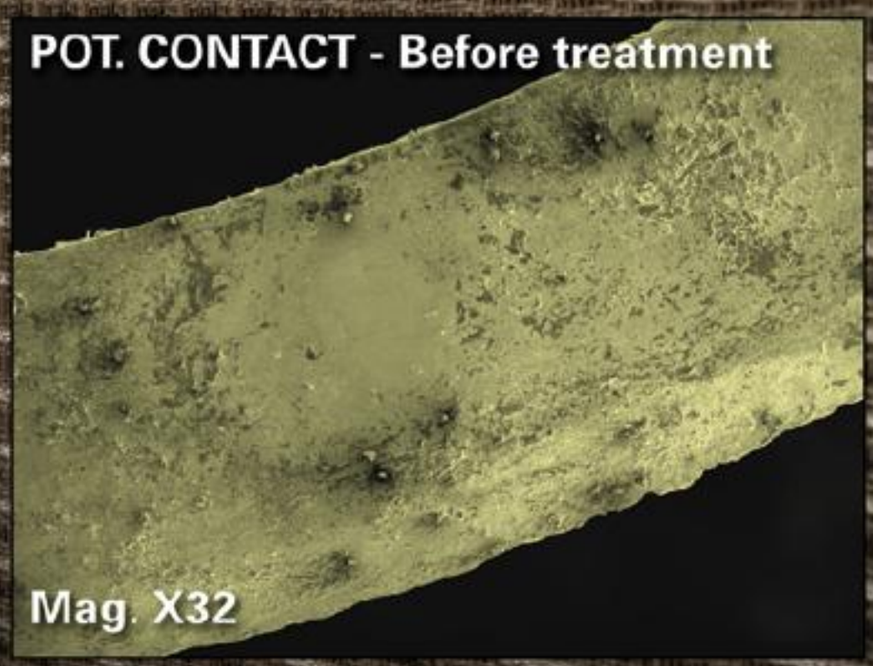

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